



# THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION  
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

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## BUFFALO BILL AND THE MASKED HUSSAR

OR  
FIGHTING THE PRAIRIE PIRATES



BY  
THE AUTHOR  
OF "BUFFALO BILL"

BY AN EXERTION OF SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH BUFFALO BILL DREW THE HUSSAR OVER THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF, AND COVERING HIM WITH HIS REVOLVER, SAID: "YOU ARE MY PRISONER, MY MASKED PARD!"





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No. 59.

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Price Five Cents.

## Buffalo Bill and the Masked Hussar;

OR,

## FIGHTING THE PRAIRIE PIRATES.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

### CHAPTER I. THE DRIVER'S FATE.

"Well, Cody, what do you think now?"

This question was addressed by Colonel Yulee of the United States Army to Buffalo Bill, as the two sat together at the frontier post—Fort Advance.

The scout had been asked for his advice in a serious matter.

A band of robbers known as the "Masked Hussars," because they invariably wore brass helmets which completely concealed their faces from view, had just stopped a coach on the Gold Valley Road and killed the driver. They had even the audacity to send one of their own number to drive the coach to the nearest village.

A short time before this Buffalo Bill had led an expedition against the Masked Hussars, had traced them to their hiding place and destroyed their stronghold. The robbers, however, had escaped death by means of an underground tunnel, which was discovered later and it was supposed that they had left that part of the country for good.

Every honest man in the vicinity breathed more freely when Buffalo Bill's exploit was known abroad, and it was generally hoped that the series of robberies which

had been terrifying the bordermen on all sides was a thing of the past.

But now these bandits had broken out again, showing that they had not left the country, but had only sought some fresh hiding place from which they could sally out to hold up passing coaches.

Buffalo Bill frowned as he read the dispatch announcing the latest deeds of the Masked Hussars.

The dispatch read as follows:

"The Gold Valley Overland coach was halted yesterday at Bitter Brook, by a party of horsemen who suddenly dashed out of a cañon and surrounded it.

"They were dressed in uniform, wore brass helmets with visors that served as perfect masks.

"There were thirteen of them, and three appeared to be officers, one having his uniform trimmed with gold lace, and the other two gold and silver insignia of rank, which were skull and cross-bones worked on the left sleeve.

"Only one, the leader, spoke, the others remaining silent.

"He looked into the coach, eyed each passenger closely, and then glanced up at the driver, whom he told to dismount from his box.



"The driver did so, and the leader made him take his coat off and roll up the shirt sleeve of his left arm."

"After glancing at the arm the leader called to one of his officers and said:

"I doom this man to death!"

"He then said something to the driver which seemed to terrify him greatly, and he was led away a few paces and six of the mounted men drew their revolvers, and, at the word of their chief, fired.

"The unfortunate driver dropped dead, the six bullets having been unerringly sent into his forehead.

"Then the leader told one of his officers, the one wearing silver skull and cross-bones, to mount the box and drive on into the stage station, ten miles distant.

"He obeyed, his horse trotting behind obediently, at the call of his rider.

"We rolled away, leaving the Hussars, as they call themselves, in the road, by the body of the dead driver.

"I got upon the box with the masked driver and asked him a number of questions.

"All I could get out of him in response was that the leader was Major Mephisto, and that the band were known as the Masked Hussars.

"He drove us to within half a mile of the station, dismounted from the box, and bade me take the reins and drive the rest of the way.

"As he mounted his horse one of the passengers, a reckless miner, foolishly shot at him, wounding him I am sure, for he reeled in the saddle; but his revenge came quickly, as he dashed up to the coach window and sent a bullet into the brain of the one who had fired the shot.

"Then he wheeled and rode rapidly away, and I drove on to the station, then here with this report, sending it to you by one of the stablemen."

Such was the report, and it was written by a young lieutenant who had been a passenger on the coach.

Buffalo Bill read most attentively the report, and then said:

"Well, colonel, there is but one way for me to learn the mysterious ways of these Masked Hussars."

"And how is that, Cody?"

"To take the coaches through and back."

"They may kill you."

"I must take the same chances that other passengers do, colonel."

"Well, Cody, the solution of the mystery is in your hands, so do as you deem best, and all the aid you need, command me for it."

"Thank you, sir; but I will start out alone, and when I have made the discoveries I hope to, I will call on you, sir, to help me."

"When do you start, Cody?"

"To-night, sir."

And as the scout spoke Captain Vaughan, a young officer who commanded a company at the fort, hastily entered, his manner showing that he had important news to communicate.

Both Colonel Yulee and Buffalo Bill saw that Captain Vaughan had departed from his usual custom and gotten excited.

His face showed it, and his voice had an angry ring as he spoke.

"Colonel Yulee, I come to make an unfortunate report, sir," he said.

"Well, Vaughan, what has happened, for your looks show that it is no ordinary affair?"

"The prisoner has escaped, sir."

"The Indian, for he was all we had?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fighting Fox?"

"He is as sly as his name," the scout said.

"But that is not all."

"Ah! there has been culpable negligence then?" said Colonel Yulee, sternly.

"Hardly that, sir, under the circumstances, which I will at once explain."

"The relief guard on its rounds, sir, went to the gate sentinel's post, and the man on duty was found bound and gagged."

"What?"

"He was released, sir, and reported that he was pacing his post when he received a blow on the back of the head that felled him to the ground.

"He was partly stunned, but had no power to cope with his adversary, who, he said, was dressed in uniform and wore a mask.

"A gag was thrust into his mouth and he was bound and dragged to his sentry box.

"Then his captor took his uniform cap and walked boldly into the fort."

"A bold fellow, certainly; but he must have been one of the garrison."

"No, colonel, for the daring fellow then went to the guardhouse, waited at the corner until the sentinel came along on his beat, and, springing upon him, dealt him a blow that must have stunned him. At any rate, he got the man in his power, opened the door of the guardhouse, released the Indian chief, and between them they carried or forced the sentinel to go along. The Indian must have rigged out in a uniform, for there were some scattered about the floor. They passed out in the darkness, with the sentinel a prisoner, and as they reached the sentry box at the gate, halted. Then the bold rescuer told the sentinel there to say to you that he needed the soldier he had taken from the guardhouse, and to scratch him off the rolls, as he would be dead within twenty-four hours.

"He also said that he desired to release Fighting Fox, and that in doing so he had found the man guarding him was one whom he wanted for execution, and hence he had taken him."

"Such boldness I never heard of!" exclaimed Colonel Yulee, glancing about him into the faces of several of the officers who had entered. "But, Cody, the sentinel said that the masked man threw his knife into the side of the sentry box and said: 'Give that to Buffalo Bill from me. It will tell him who I am, and more, warn him to keep off my trail.'"

Captain Vaughan then handed the knife to Buffalo Bill.

It was a pearl-handled bowie-knife, mounted in gold, and upon the hilt was the name neatly engraven:

MAJOR MEPHISTO.

The Masked Hussar.



This announcement was a cause of amazement to all, but the scout smiled and said:

"I am sorry I cannot follow the advice of Major Mephisto, for I shall still follow on his track."

"Who can he be, for he certainly must know about the fort, or he could never have come in as he did," the colonel remarked.

"There is but one way to find out who he is, and that is to trail him," said Buffalo Bill.

"But he will have a great start of you by morning, Cody, as you cannot follow to-night."

"Yes, colonel, I will be off at once, for Surgeon Powell has made me a present of his splendid Spanish hound, Grip, and he will follow the trail once he is on the scent."

Exclamations of pleasure followed this announcement, Lieutenant Otey being loudest in his enthusiasm. The scout at once left to prepare for his midnight trailing.

In a short while he was ready, Hussar under saddle, and one of the two other horses he was to take along carrying a large pack.

The enormous Spanish hound, as fierce looking as a tiger, was then taken by Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill into the guardhouse.

He quickly caught the scent, and a lariat was fastened to the ring in his collar, the other end being looped around the horn of the scout's saddle.

Then Buffalo Bill mounted, waved farewell to the crowd of officers assembled to see him start, and rode out of the fort.

The noble hound never swerved but an instant at the gate, sniffed about the sentry box, and then, with a low yelp, started off across the prairie.

He seemed to soon feel that he was not to go at a rapid pace, as he was held in check by the lariat, and intelligently regulated his speed to suit what the scout deemed the best gait to go.

Arriving a quarter of a mile from the fort, the hound halted and moved about in different directions.

Instantly Buffalo Bill dismounted, and striking a match lighted a small lantern.

"It is as I thought; here are tracks, and here he left his horses while he went to the fort. There were two horses, and there are three men, so they will not be able to travel so very fast. On, Grip, and follow the trail you are on, for it is the right one."

Again mounting, the scout once more followed the hound on the trail through the darkness.

When daylight dawned and Buffalo Bill halted for rest, he was many a long mile from the fort and up in the mountain country.

The noble Spanish hound had unfailingly followed the trail through the long hours of the night, and the scout had made him keep a slower pace by far than the animal cared to go.

When it became so light that he could see, the scout sought a good shelter to camp for breakfast, and, after feeding the hound and staking out the horses, he went back to the trail and closely examined it.

"Two horses, both shod, and a man on foot wearing a boot.

"I am on the right trail, that is certain."

So saying, he returned to the side of the little brook, built a small fire, made a pot of coffee and ate his breakfast.

An hour's rest he felt was enough for the hound and the horses, and so mounted and pressed on once more.

The trail led him into the depths of the mountains, and in a direction that he knew, by going on a straight line for a hundred miles, he would cross the five Overland trails of the coach lines.

It was evening when he halted upon the brow of a lofty ridge that overhung a beautiful valley.

Through the lower end of the valley he knew that one of the overland trails ran, and he was aware that no settler had yet been bold enough to make a home in that vicinity, few caring to go far from the mining camps or army outposts.

So occupied was he in looking toward the lower end of the valley that he failed to observe a more interesting sight nearer, until a growl from Grip caused him to follow the eyes of the hound, who was looking sheer down beneath him.

The sight that the scout beheld seemed to please him, for his face lighted up with a smile.

What he saw was a level meadow encircled by a flowing stream.

It was close under the ridge, and upon the meadow were staked a number of horses, feeding upon the rich grass that grew there in abundance.

Nearer in under the ridge was a camp, and in it the scout counted fifteen forms.

The camp was a temporary one, for there were no tents, cabins or wickiups, but merely several fires, around which the men were gathered eating their evening meal.

The trail which the scout had been following led down the ridge-side to the valley below.

But for Grip it would have been lost a score of times, never to have been regained, as the nature of the ground had been such no human being could have followed it.

But Grip's nose never failed in following the scent, and Buffalo Bill patted him on the head and said:

"You are true as steel, Grip, and you brought me to the right spot."

It was yet nearly an hour to sunset, at least from where the scout was on the ridge, though the shadows in the valley had begun to deepen already.

From his point of lookout Buffalo Bill could see the little camp, while he himself remained unseen.

He had fastened his horses back on the ridge, where they had good feeding, and, with Grip by his side, was watching the movements in the camp below.

There were fifteen men, thirteen of whom were in the uniform and helmets of the Hussars, and not a visor did he see up—even though they were in camp—further than to permit of their eating their supper.

Taking his glass, the scout turned it upon the party, and then, off under a tree, he discovered a sixteenth person, busy about a small fire.

There, too, was a pack saddle and a camp table.

This man also was in the uniform of the Masked Hussars, but even though engaged in cooking he wore the brass helmet.

Two of the men about the other fires were, however, without a uniform.

One of these was, as Buffalo Bill plainly saw, his captive Indian, Fighting Fox, who had been rescued the night before from the guardhouse of Fort Advance by Major Mephisto.



He was in his chief's costume now, though it was pretty much worn after his confinement in the guardhouse.

He stood slightly apart, talking to one whose tall form and erect bearing showed him to be the leader of the Masked Hussars, Major Mephisto, who had warned the scout against trailing him.

Leaning against a tree not far distant from where stood Major Mephisto and the Indian chief, was a man in uniform.

The scout turned his glass upon him for a long time, and then murmured slowly to himself:

"He is bound, and he is the soldier that Major Mephisto brought from the fort with him, the man who was on guard over the Fighting Fox.

"I will see what can be done to rescue him to-night."

So saying the scout led his horses back to a good camping place, made them secure, fed Grip and tied him to a tree, placing a muzzle upon him to prevent his making any sound, and then went back to the ridge bluff.

During his absence the prisoner in uniform had been released from his bonds and was eating his supper, while one of the Masked Hussars stood near waiting for him to finish the meal.

Riding away from the camp was Fighting Fox, having just parted from Major Mephisto, who had apparently gone to get him one of the horses staked out on the meadow.

"I shall see what can be done for that soldier to-night," muttered the scout a second time; and he went back to his solitary camp to eat his supper as the night gathered about him.

## CHAPTER II.

### A DARING DEED.

It looked as black as jet in the valley to Buffalo Bill, as he returned to the ridge bluff and looked down.

The fires twinkled as they smoldered, now and then a flame springing up to die out in an instant.

The scout had prepared himself for the daring trip he had contemplated by taking off his boots and replacing them with a pair of moccasins.

He also took off his coat and sombrero, placing a cap upon his head.

His rifle was slung at his back, and his revolvers and knife were in his belt, while a lariat was held in one hand.

He had noted the trail that led to the valley while it was light, so that he had no difficulty in making his way down and around the side of the hill—the way that he knew Major Mephisto, the Indian and the prisoner had gone.

Arriving at a position near the camp, he remained watching for some time.

The flame in one of the fires flashed up for a moment, as though for his benefit, and he spied the camping place of the chief, near him a man lying, who was without doubt the one he had seen cooking at the fire off to itself, and in a group beneath a large tree were the men.

"They are not all there.

"Some are lying elsewhere, or have gone off on guard duty, so I must be very careful," he said.

Creeping still nearer, he waited until the flickering fire

again flashed up in flame, and he saw the prisoner lying at the tree to which he had been bound.

To reach him would be dangerous in the extreme, but Buffalo Bill meant to try it.

While the flame burned he took in the entire situation, and then, going nearer, he remained for a long time waiting and watching.

"Fires are treacherous, for when one thinks they are out, up bursts a flame, so I must not be caught that way," he said.

Feeling convinced that the fires had died out, he at last began to move along toward the tree.

He had noticed a wash in the ground that led near the tree, and, getting into this, he made his way to within twenty feet of the prisoner.

Not thirty feet off in another direction were the Hussars asleep on their blankets, and he felt that a chain of sentinels were around the camp and horses, excepting on the side toward the bluff.

"Now or never," he muttered, grimly, and he wormed himself along on the ground toward the tree.

He was within three feet of the prisoner, when he saw him start, and he knew that the soldier was awake and had seen him.

"Sh! I am Buffalo Bill," he whispered.

"Thank God! you have come to save me," came the answering whisper.

The scout drew nearer, and held out his hand with the knife in it, and quickly the bonds on the wrist were severed.

Then those that held the ankles were cut.

"Now fix your blanket to appear as though you were under it, and creep after me, but make no sound."

The soldier obeyed, and the gully was reached in safety.

Here they remained for a moment, and then once more the scout was about to move on, when suddenly his quick eye detected a form coming through the darkness.

Lying quiet, they saw him approach the sleeping men and call up five of them.

These arose and started away silently, while the man who had awakened them threw himself down upon the blankets just vacated.

"They are changing guard, for it is midnight. Some of them are awake, so we dare not leave this gully until the others return and go to sleep. But if it comes to a run, follow me when I give the word," whispered Buffalo Bill.

"I will do as you say, sir," responded the soldier.

In five minutes, forms were seen approaching through the darkness and coming toward the camp.

There were four of them, the fifth man having come in to arouse the relief to go out to their posts.

The four passed near the tree where the prisoner was supposed to be, and then went and joined their sleeping comrades, throwing themselves down to rest.

It seemed to the soldier ages that Buffalo Bill waited, but the latter was as patient as an Indian, and not until he was sure that the Hussars were all asleep again did he stir from the gully.

Then he crept out, the soldier close at his heels, and at last the shelter of the trees at the base of the bluff was reached.

Going up the trail at as rapid a gait as the soldier could



follow, they soon reached the place where the scout had left his horses and the hound.

He told the soldier to mount, and then started along the ridge, going slowly and cautiously.

It was fully an hour before they reached a broad trail that crossed the mountain, and here Buffalo Bill halted.

"Now, my man, this trail will lead you to the stage station twelve miles from Fort Advance, and this horse will carry you there in four hours if you push him. Please say to Colonel Yulee that I continue on, and send you back to report. Do you understand, my man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now let me ask you if you know the man who made you a prisoner?"

"His men call him Major Mephisto, sir."

"You know him by no other name?"

"No, sir."

"Why did he make you a prisoner?"

"He said he would tell me before I was shot."

"Ah! but he knew you?"

"He seemed to recognize me, sir, when he made me prisoner at the guardhouse."

"Have you any mark on your left arm, my man?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"What is it?"

"There is tattooed in my arm a skull and crossbones in black, with a chain of red links surrounding it."

"A strange device."

The man made no reply, and Buffalo Bill said:

"Now be off, and I advise you not to tarry."

"But, Mr. Cody, I wish to thank you for saving my life, and you took a fearful risk to do so, sir."

"We all have to take risks upon the border; but now good-night, and I am sorry I have no saddle and bridle for you, but the blanket and lariat will serve in their place, and I have an extra revolver you can have, as you may need it."

The soldier held out his hand, and wrung the scout's warmly in farewell.

Then the two parted, the soldier returning to the fort and Buffalo Bill penetrating further into the mountains.

When the rescued soldier rode up to the gates of the fort his horse showed that he had been pressed hard, for he was covered with foam, and panted heavily.

The rider had not spared him, in his anxiety to reach a place of safety, and had not tarried at the stage station longer than to learn the nearest trail to the fort.

His coming had been reported to the officer of the day, and Captain Vaughan had been sent for, and recognized with his glass the man who had been captured by Major Mephisto while on duty at the guardhouse.

"Well, Van Dorn, you are back again, I am glad to see, and it looks as if you had escaped from Major Mephisto," said Captain Vaughan.

"I have, sir, but not by myself. Could I see the colonel, sir?" answered the soldier.

"Yes; I will take you to him."

Now Van Dorn was not a soldier that was very popular in the fort.

He was a surly fellow, and one of a number who had enlisted upon the border, and who had given considerable trouble on account of their recklessness and unruly ways.

Colonel Yulee did not like the man, and he had half-

believed that he was secretly a friend of the Masked Hussar, to have been so readily surprised on his post.

"You are back, sir?"

"Yes, colonel, and glad to get back, sir."

"What excuse have you for leaving your post?"

"Colonel Yulee, I was no more expecting danger than you are now, sir. I was walking up and down, from corner to corner of the guardhouse, when I was suddenly knocked down. The guardhouse lamp over the door was burning, sir, and I saw that the man was in uniform and wore a mask. He thrust a revolver to my head, and told me he would fire if I uttered a word, and then he forced a gag into my mouth and drew up the sleeve of my left arm. 'I thought I was not mistaken when I saw your face,' he said to me, and then he tied my arms behind my back, and a more powerful devil I never saw, sir."

"Then he unlocked the door, sir, and called to the Injun, speaking in the Sioux tongue, and he made the redskin put on a uniform that he pulled out of the chest there, and put him on one side of me, telling me if I made any resistance he would knife me."

"He then led the way to the gate, and, getting there, I saw that Dennis Lester was gagged and bound in the sentry-box. Going out on the prairie, we came to two horses staked out, and I mounted one, the Indian springing up behind me, and Major Mephisto rode the other animal. After a long ride the Indian walked, and then I was forced to, and in that way we kept on into the mountains until we came to the camp of the Hussars, about noon the next day."

"I was tied to a tree, sir, and, knowing I was to be killed, for Major Mephisto said he would have me shot, and tell me why when the time came, I could not sleep, and was lying awake, when I saw something dark creeping toward me. The Hussars were only a short distance off, and the guards were around the camp; but I thought it was a panther or bear, and, being bound, I was about to call out, when I saw that it was a man."

"Buffalo Bill, by all that's holy!" cried Colonel Yulee, excitedly.

"Yes, sir, and he saved me, though while we were lying there in a gully the guard was changed; but the scout had made me fix my blanket to look as though I was under it, and my absence was not noticed."

"The splendid fellow," said the colonel.

"So I think, sir; but he took me to where his horses were and rode with me to the stage trail. Then he put me on his extra horse, gave me this revolver, and told me to come back and report to you that he was going on after the Hussars."

"Well, Van Dorn, you have had a close call, and you owe your life to Buffalo Bill."

"I will not have you punished for being captured on your post, but be careful not to be caught napping again."

"I will, sir."

"Do you know who this man is who calls himself Major Mephisto?"

"No, sir."

"Did he give you no reason for your capture?"

"No, sir."

"But he meant to kill you?"

"So he said, sir."

"And the Indian?"

"Went on with us, sir, and then Major Mephisto gave



him a horse, and he started for the camp of Red Heart, the Renegade."

"Did you see this Mephisto's face?"

"No, sir."

"Nor the faces of any of his men?"

"No, sir, for they were kept constantly hidden by the mask on the helmet."

"Well, you can go now," and Colonel Yulee turned to Lieutenant Otey, a recent arrival at the fort, who had joined the army from civilian life, who just then entered.

"Well, Otey, what is it?"

"Colonel Yulee, have you not had the key of Sergeant Drew's cabin until you gave it to me an hour ago, sir?"

Sergeant Drew was a soldier who had quarreled with Lieutenant Otey, his superior officer, for some mysterious reason, and shot him, wounding him severely. He had been sentenced to die, but had been pardoned. Buffalo Bill, who brought the pardon, had arrived at the fort just as Sergeant Dudley Drew was being executed.

Several rifles were discharged, and the sergeant was seen to fall.

It was never known whether he was killed or only wounded, as a band of Indians had attacked the fort at the same moment.

After the savages had been beaten off no trace could be found of the sergeant, and it was supposed that the redskins had carried him off in order to torture him.

Sergeant Drew had been a mysterious man, evidently of great education, and much above the ordinary soldiers in refinement. Every one supposed that he had some bitter quarrel with Lieutenant Otey before either of them entered the army.

He had received permission to live in a cabin by himself, which he had decorated with pictures of his own painting, as he was something of an artist. It was this cabin that Lieutenant Otey had just been examining.

"Yes, Otey," said the colonel, in answer to his question.

"No one else has had it?"

"No, for it has been kept in my private desk."

"Who locked it up, sir?"

"Vaughan did, at my request."

Turning to Captain Vaughan, who was present, Lieutenant Otey asked:

"Captain, will you oblige me by going with me to see if all in that cabin is as you left it?"

"Certainly," and Grayson Vaughan walked out with the ordnance officer.

In a short while they returned, and Captain Vaughan said:

"Some one has been there, colonel."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, sir, for a number of things are gone."

"Among them a most beautiful portrait which the sergeant had painted of some lady friend," Hobart Otey remarked.

"There can be no mistake, Vaughan?"

"None, colonel, for I left all there in very different shape from what I found them, I assure you."

"There were a pair of rapiers, some dueling pistols, the sergeant's belt of arms, and numerous other things that I saw there, are not there now, colonel," Hobart Otey observed.

"Well, I will have the matter looked into, and if they have been taken by any one in the fort, they can be found;

but is not that a courier, Vaughan?" and Colonel Yulee looked out of the window as he spoke, his eyes resting upon a horseman who had just ridden into the fort.

The man was a courier, and, entering headquarters, handed to Colonel Yulee his dispatches.

Having glanced over the official papers, Colonel Yulee picked up a letter addressed in a very beautiful feminine hand.

His face brightened, and then clouded as he read it, and he turned, as was his wont, to his adjutant:

"Vaughan."

"Yes, sir."

"I have a letter here from my daughter."

"I trust she is well, colonel?"

"Yes, and she is coming here."

"Coming to Fort Advance, sir?" said Grayson Vaughan, who had seen the colonel's daughter two years before and remembered her then as a very beautiful maiden of seventeen.

"Yes, she writes me to expect her soon, and says that the family she was going to Europe with will not go, as Mr. Hull has died, and he is the father of Ethel's school-mate and boon companion. So she says she will start West and come to me, and she is anxious to lead the wild life again that she did when she was fourteen and was on the Texan border with me for two years."

"We must spruce the old fort up, colonel, and get all things in shape for Miss Yulee's coming."

"Thank you, Vaughan, but Ethel is one who takes things as she finds them; but I am really glad she is coming."

"Why, the old fort will be quite lively."

"Yes, sir; but will not Miss Yulee have to have an escort from the point she leaves the coach?"

"True, and I would ask you to command the escort, but I do not know just when she is coming or at what point to expect her; and, Vaughan, now I think of it, with these Masked Hussars on the overland trails I am almost sorry she is coming," and the anxious look again came over the face of Colonel Yulee as Major Mephisto and his men flashed before his mind.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE FATAL MARK.

There was a reign of terror along the overland trails, which ran from a certain starting point upon the prairies into the range of mountains which few white men had dared to penetrate until a couple of years before.

With mines scattered through the mountains, army posts established at different points, and settlements becoming more frequent, there had come to be a demand for a means of traveling from point to point.

Hence the establishment of the overland stagecoach lines, diverging from the main trail to half a dozen different points, some of the runs being a hundred miles.

As one of these overland trails had a station within a dozen miles of Fort Advance on the north and another trail came within twice that distance to the southward, Colonel Yulee did not know at which point to look for his daughter's arrival.

The Sioux had been keeping very quiet, and yet the stage-lines ran dangerously near their hunting-grounds,



and many people forced to travel that way were fearful of massacre.

Then the Masked Hussars had won a fearful name as desperate knights of the road, though, excepting their attack on soldiers, not an act of bloodshed could be placed against them, nor had they robbed the passengers in a single instance.

Still, the Indians and the Masked Hussars were a nightmare to passengers, and travel on the overland trails was entered upon with fear and trembling.

At one of the stations a stage was standing one morning, waiting to start on its run through the mountains.

It was a breakfast station, and a wretched place at that, for only half a dozen log cabins joined together comprised what was known as the "Prairie Hotel."

There were log stables, a saloon, blacksmith shop, and a few scattering cabins of hardy settlers, and these *in toto* were known as Prairie City.

The driver of the coach about to go over the mountain trail was known as Reckless Ben, and he had won his name from his sheer recklessness in the face of dangers which he had been forced to meet in his half-dozen years of stage-driving.

He was a giant in size, strong as a lion, quick to use his weapons in necessity, and a dead shot.

He drove four splendid horses to his coach, which was painted in the highest degree of art, according to his views, but did not look unlike a rainbow as far as colors were concerned.

He was patiently waiting for the incoming stage across the prairies, when he would take the passengers and mail brought in, and start on his drive of sixty miles to the prairies beyond the mountain spur, and which would carry him within twelve miles of Fort Advance.

He was calmly smoking his pipe when a stranger walked up and saluted him politely:

"You come in last night, didn't yer, pard, fer I thought I seen yer ride inter ther hotel stables?" he said to the stranger.

"Yes, and I tried to find you last night, but could not, as they said you had gone to a dance at another settlement," the stranger replied.

"So I hed, pard, fer thar was new settlers come in thar, and they had darters with 'em and gals is skeerce in these parts and I does like ter sling a hoof in a Virginny reel an' sich."

"I hope you had a good time, sir."

"I rid fifteen mile ter git thar, danced ontill four o'clock, rid back here, and I jist feel lovely, and will go ag'in, for thar is a female critter that I tuk a shine to, and I is a marryin' man, pard."

"I hope to be at your wedding, and if you will do me a favor, I'll give you and your bride a fine horse each for a marriage gift."

"Now will yer?"

"I will."

"Yer looks like a man as c'u'dn't lie if yer wanten to."

"I can, but I won't."

"I'll tie to yer, pard, though I never seen yer afore last night, when you rid inter ther stable as I was ridin' out to go to ther dance."

"I will keep my word, and throw in a saddle and bridle for you, and your wife, too."

"That gal has got ter marry me now; but what is it yer wants did?"

"Do you ever drive six horses over the mountains?"

"I tried it onct, but they is too hard ter handle on these roads."

"Well, I wish you to put my two horses in as leaders and drive them."

"Now what on earth does yer want me to do thet fer?"

"There are no better horses on this frontier, I assure you, and I wish you would do it."

"Yer hain't playin' no game on me?"

"No, and I wish you to take my pack-saddle and pack along, too."

"Pard, what is yer up to, fer ther Lord's sake?"

The stranger did not reply, but simply drew back his coat, and showed a gold badge that he wore.

Reckless Ben glanced at it, then at the stranger, and said earnestly:

"Pard, say no more, fer I'll go yer, durned ef I don't, for you is jist ther man I hes long wanted to see. Put it thar, pard, fer I likes your style."

While Reckless Ben and the stranger were talking over the matter of putting two extra horses in the lead of the driver's four, the stagecoach was sighted coming, far across the prairies.

Reckless Ben and his companion at once went to the stables, to get the two extras in harness, and as the stage with its six-in-hand rolled out, the other one came up at a run, for no matter how slow the pace on the road, when they neared the stations the drivers were wont to "whoop 'em up," as they elegantly expressed it.

In addition to having his two horses as leaders, the stranger had his pack saddle stowed in the boot, and his own saddle and bridle in a bag on top.

The stranger stood quietly surveying the passengers as they alighted from the coach, and he saw among them a young and beautiful girl.

There was also an old woman, poorly dressed and with a sad face; a miner in his rough garb, and a soldier, who seemed about to recognize the stranger when he gave him a warning glance and turned away.

As the passengers went in to breakfast, Reckless Ben said to the stranger:

"Pards, we has got a high-toned leddy along ter-day, fer she are ther darter o' Colonel Yulee at Fort Advance, and she are goin' through to her pa."

"Indeed! She was the young lady, then, whom I saw get out of the coach?"

"Yas, and we has a sojer along, too, and ten ter one he will suffer, fer them Masked Hussars is awful hard on the army boys."

"I hope we will get through all right," was the reply.

"I hopes so, too, fer ther sake o' ther leddies, fer I does hate scrimmages when wimmin folks is round; but does you ride up with me on ther box?"

"No, I think I shall ride inside," was the reply.

"Waal, you knows best; but whar will yer dog ride?" said the driver, alluding to a magnificent hound that accompanied the stranger.

"Make him lie down at your feet in the boot, and if the Hussars halt us, drop a blanket over him to hide him."

"He won't bite?"

"No, he will obey you, for he has great intelligence. Come, sir, up on the box and lie down," and the stranger



turned to the large, sagacious-looking hound that he had just led out of the stable.

In obedience the noble animal went up over the wheel to the box, and laid down out of sight in the boot.

"I'll be keerful all ther same not ter put my foot on his tail in mistake fer ther brake," said Reckless Ben.

The young lady passenger now came out, and she was kindly assisting the old woman, who seemed in feeble health, while she remarked:

"I hope I can stand it to get to the end of the road, where my boy is in the mines. When he sent for me to come to him, that he was getting rich, I don't think he knew I was getting old, miss."

"Oh, you will soon recuperate after you get there," said the young lady, in a pleasant tone, and she aided the other into the stage, just as the stranger stepped forward to offer his services.

"Thank you, sir," and the maiden glanced up into the handsome face of the stranger.

The miner and soldier now got in, the stranger followed, and with a crack of his whip Reckless Ben sent his six-in-hand on their journey, followed, as was the custom of Prairie citizens, by a whoop from those who were congregated about the "hotel" to see the stage depart.

In fact, that was the event of Prairie City.

On rolled the coach, moving toward the Lone Mountain range rising in the distance, and which was yet miles away.

The seat of the stranger was in front, directly opposite to the maiden, and the soldier and the miner also occupied a seat in front with him.

The two ladies occupied the rear seat, the center one being folded up and not in use.

The soldier asked several questions regarding the country, which the stranger answered, and this caused the young lady to also make inquiries regarding the overland trails, and the distance she would have to travel to reach Fort Advance after leaving the coach.

The stranger gave her all the information she wished, in a quiet way that was very winning, and she was emboldened to say:

"And how will I reach the fort, sir, after leaving the stage, for I have not notified my father of my coming? I am a daughter of Colonel Yulee, the commandant."

"I am going to the fort, Miss Yulee, and will inform your father that you are at the station, or I will be glad to offer myself as an escort, if you will accept of my services."

"I should be glad to do so, thank you, sir, as I am most anxious to reach my home, for I may call it so, as an army officer has no home, I suppose, but the garrison where he is stationed; but will you tell me something of those terrible Masked Hussars that I hear so much about all along the way?"

"They are a band of road agents, under a skillful leader, who seems to be seeking revenge rather than gold."

"But revenge against whom?"

"The army, for his blows have been against soldiers, and his revenge lies against them."

"He is the soldiers' foe, then?"

"Yes, Miss Yulee."

"But what motive can he have of revenge?"

"That I do not know."

"I wonder if I am safe?" the soldier said, with a smile that was forced.

"He may not halt us, sir."

"But if he did?"

"May I ask, sir, if you will show me your left arm, and perhaps I can tell you?"

"Show you my arm?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Have you any tattooing upon it?"

"Well, yes; but how did you know it?"

"I did not; I merely wished to know if you had."

"Well, I have."

"A skull and crossbones in black, with a red chain around it?"

"Yes," and the soldier's face whitened.

But he rolled up his sleeve, and there revealed the tattooing.

"May I ask why you allowed that to be done?" the stranger asked.

"Oh, it was simply for fun."

"Was it done long ago?"

"Some time, yes."

"Others have the same mark."

"How do you know?"

"It matters not, but my advice to you is not to go over the overland trail, but to strike out on foot and avoid the Masked Hussars."

"But why?" asked the frightened soldier.

"That mark will cost you your life. You will not take my advice, my soldier friend?" asked the stranger, as the coach rolled along.

"No."

"It is a good advice."

"Nonsense."

"Call it so, but remember that I warned you."

"I do not believe I will suffer because I have that mark on my arm."

"Others have."

"Not on that account."

"Yes; that mark is fatal if the Hussars halt us."

"I cannot believe it."

"It is but a short distance back to the station, and I again advise you to go back and try some other way of crossing the mountains, and, in fact, wait until some scouting party comes along."

"I will go through now."

"Well, the secret is with you, and you know best who it is that is wreaking revenge upon those who wear that mark."

All saw the soldier turn pale, but he seemed to feel that he was safe, and the subject was dropped, for, seeing him stubborn, the stranger said no more about it.

"Tell me of those strange Hussars, please," urged Ethel Yulee of the stranger.

He told of their strange uniform, their helmet masks, and what it was said that they had done upon the Overland trails, adding:

"Ladies have nothing to fear at their hands, I am sure, Miss Yulee, nor have men who are not stamped with that fatal tattoo."

They had now reached the mountains, and the stage was winding up the steep trails.



At noon they stopped at the mountain station to change the horses and get dinner.

A rest of an hour was made, but the leaders were again put back in the team, with four fresh horses behind them.

But the leaders seemed not to mind this at all, for they appeared equally as fresh as the new team, and Reckless Ben seemed to have spared them all he could.

As they were getting into the coach to start again, a horseman suddenly dashed by at full speed.

He was clad in uniform, and the stranger said he must be an army courier, and his destination was Fort Advance.

But he was gone before he could be hailed, that Ethel Yulee might send word to her father of her coming.

So on once more the coach rolled on its way, the hoofs of the horses and roar of the wheels awakening a thousand echoes through the mountain passes.

"Pards and leddies, we is gittin' inter Hussar stampin'-ground now," called Reckless Ben through the window, and his words caused all except one to start.

That one was the stranger, and Ethel Yulee noticed that his face neither changed color nor moved a muscle.

The soldier now moved uneasily, and said:

"I wish I had taken your advice, sir."

"I hope you will not have cause to regret it."

Hardly had the words been uttered, when out of a cañon on either side darted a number of horsemen.

There were six on a side, and they surrounded the coach in an instant.

Not a word was spoken, and Reckless Ben drew rein.

"They are upon us, but do not be alarmed," the stranger said, addressing Ethel Yulee and the elderly lady.

Just then there rode out of the cañon on the right a horseman of splendid appearance.

He rode a snow-white horse, with sweeping mane and tail and arched neck.

The bridle and saddle were military, and very handsome.

The rider wore stylish cavalry boots, spurs, a uniform trimmed with gold, gauntlet gloves and a brass helmet that shone like fire.

His face was completely covered by the visor, and a network of brass fell from the low edge of the helmet upon his shoulders.

In the helmet was a crimson horsehair plume, and he certainly was a most striking individual.

Riding up to the stage window on the side where the stranger and Ethel Yulee sat, he bowed low and said: "Pardon, ladies, if I disturb you; but it is one of the misfortunes of travel in this wild land."

Then he glanced at the others in the coach, his eyes resting for a long time upon the face of the soldier, who became livid under the gaze.

"You are a soldier, I see," he said.

"I am," was the low reply.

"How long have you been in the army?"

"Two years."

"Where did you enlist?"

"In Texas."

"I thought so."

"Let me see your left arm, please."

The soldier held it out.

"Bare it, please."

"What for?"

"Because I ask it."

"I will not."

"Bare it, please."

And a revolver looked squarely in the face of the soldier.

He did so slowly and turned the back of his arm to the Hussar.

"The other side, sir."

It was slowly turned over.

"Ah! as I supposed, you bear the fatal tattoo."

"I seldom forget a face."

"Who are you?" asked the soldier, in a voice that trembled.

"Major Mephisto, the Masked Hussar."

The soldier uttered no word, and the Hussar continued:

"You will dismount from the coach, please, for I want you."

"What for?"

"To die!"

A cry of horror broke from the lips of Ethel Yulee, and she cried:

"Spare him, sir, I beg of you, for he is one of my father's command."

"Your father, lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"His name, please."

"Colonel Yulee."

"I cannot spare this man, Miss Yulee, for he must die."

"My dear sir, will you not make an exception in your revenge this time, for the sake of the ladies present?" said the stranger.

Major Mephisto now turned his gaze full upon the speaker, and said in a stern voice:

"Buffalo Bill, do not tax my patience with you too far."

"Buffalo Bill!"

The name was uttered by each one in the coach in their amazement at finding out who the handsome stranger was.

"Yes, that's him! that's Buf'ler Bill!" cried Reckless Ben, who had gotten down from the box and was standing on the step of the coach, looking in the window opposite to the Hussar.

"Yes, I know that it is Buffalo Bill, for we have met before," said Major Mephisto.

"We cannot meet too often to please me, Major Mephisto," said the scout with a meaning look.

"I could have killed you several nights ago."

"Ah!"

"Yes."

"Where and how?"

"In your camp in the Meadow Valley."

"Ha! you were there, then?"

"Did you not miss a prisoner?"

"By Heaven! but you released that soldier?"

"I did."

"That was the boldest act of your bold life, Buffalo Bill."

The scout laughed.

"I went into Fort Advance to rescue an Indian——"



"One I captured?"

"Yes, and I knew he was being held for the good conduct of that renegade white chief of the Sioux, Red Heart. I feared Red Heart would do some act to get Fighting Fox out of the way, for he is next to the renegade in rank, and so I determined to free him. I risked my life to enter the fort——"

"And that was the boldest act of your life, Major Mephisto."

"Oh, no, Cody, for I have done the same thing before."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"It was not known."

"The sentinel on duty, seeing that I did no damage, kept it to himself that I caught him on his post, bound and gagged him until I came out."

"But I recognized in the guard over Fighting Fox one I wanted, and I forced him to go with me. I would have shot him at sunrise, and you rescued him in the night."

"Yes, I saved you from committing one murder, at least."

"I shall catch him again, mark my words."

"I think not."

"Wait and see; but how did you follow me in the night, and even keep my trail by day?"

"I have good eyes for trailing outlaws," was the stern retort.

"Do not be severe, Buffalo Bill, for you know not what impels my actions in this matter."

"Some day I will find out."

"Never."

"We shall see; but to the question at hand; will you not spare this man?"

"I will not."

"Not at the request of these ladies?"

"No, under no consideration will I spare him. He must die," and the voice fairly rang out the words.

"How have I wronged you?" cried the poor soldier.

"When you face your executioners, sir, you shall know why it is I sentence you to death. Come, you are delaying the stage. Get out, and know that you have but ten minutes to live, so make your peace with your Maker, if you hope for mercy for your guilty soul."

The soldier seemed prostrate with terror; but Buffalo Bill said:

"Come, my man, if you are forced to face death, do it like a man, for we all have to die, and must not shirk it like a coward."

The words seemed to help the man, for he looked up and said:

"But must I die?"

"You must!" was the stern response of Major Mephisto.

"It's got to be did, pard, so brace up and have some style about yer," said Reckless Ben.

"But you can save me, Buffalo Bill!" cried the soldier.

"I cannot."

"You are called the bravest of the brave, you are armed, and, with the driver, there are five of us, so let us fight them."

"My friend, Buffalo Bill is the bravest of the brave, and yet he is no fool, for I have around this coach twelve men, armed to the teeth, and it would be certain death to

resist me. No, you must die, and if you will not die as becomes one who wears your uniform, then I will have you dragged out, tied to a tree and shot," said the Masked Hussar.

"If die I must, I will face death as becomes my uniform. I have been a bad man in the past, and I hoped to redeem my life as a soldier; but you say it shall not be. I am ready, Major Mephisto."

"Bravo, pard, you has got grit arter all," cried Reckless Ben, while Buffalo Bill grasped his hand, and remarked:

"Well said, Soldier Pard, and I will go with you to the last moment, if Major Mephisto will permit."

"I will, sir, for the sake of the man's last words, for I admire pluck. I am glad I will not have to execute a coward, as I feared," was the reply.

"Give me your name, and I will tell my father how you died," said Ethel Yulee, offering her hand.

"His name was Henry Jackson, Miss Yulee; but he has doubtless changed it for certain reasons," said Major Mephisto.

"You do know me," the soldier said, with surprise.

"Yes, that is why I kill you."

"My name is Henry Jackson, miss; but in the army I am enlisted as Jack Henderson, and I belong to Captain Vaughan's cavalry company, but have been East on a furlough for some weeks."

"I thank you miss, and good-by."

The old lady then grasped his hand with a simple:

"God bless you!"

Then he sprang out of the coach, while Reckless Ben said in his quaint way:

"Good luck, pard, whar yer is goin', and I guesses it's Scriptur' ef yer repents o' yer onery deeds, and dies game, yer soul will strike ther right trail when it shakes yer body fer good."

The soldier walked boldly to the rear of the coach, Buffalo Bill accompanied him, and on each side of the vehicle every other Hussar drew his horse back and rode also to the scene which Major Mephisto pointed out for the execution ground.

The old lady sat back weeping in the corner of the coach, and Ethel Yulee, with white, stern face, looked out of the window, unable to resist the fascination of the strange scene.

As though well drilled in their work, the six Hussars drew up in line at one side of the road, and Buffalo Bill walked with the soldier to the spot which Major Mephisto pointed out.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AVENGED.

The soldier had now gained his nerve, and was perfectly calm.

His face was white, but his muscles were firm, and he said with a sad smile to Buffalo Bill:

"I wish I had taken your advice, sir."

"I wish so from my heart; but, my friend, though it may be poor consolation to you to know it now, the time will come when these Hussars will reach the end of their rope," said the scout, sternly.

"I know not why he has me shot, but he told me he would tell me before I died."



"Is there anything I can do for you, my friend?"

"Yes, sir; take these papers and my watch and chain to Captain Vaughan, and he will send them back to my young wife, for I was only married three weeks ago, and had thirty days' leave to go and come; but I'll never get back now."

"Kindly step one side, Mr. Cody," called out Major Mephisto, and the scout grasped the hand of the soldier. "Be brave, for it will be over at once. You are a brave fellow, and Colonel Yulee shall know all. Good-by."

Buffalo Bill stepped to one side as he spoke, folded his arms upon his broad chest, and gazed upon the scene with unmoved face.

What he felt he did not show.

The soldier stood erect, his face calm, but livid, and his eyes turned upon his executioners.

Then the Hussar chief dismounted, and walked to the side of the doomed man, opposite to that on which stood the scout, and, turning, he called out:

"Attention, Hussars!"

The six horsemen sat upright and faced the doomed soldier.

"Draw!"

Their hands dropped upon their holsters, and six revolvers were drawn forth.

Then Major Mephisto stepped quickly to the side of the soldier and said something in a low tone.

The soldier started, and gazing at the Hussar chief's masked face, cried excitedly:

"No, no, not you?"

"Yes."

Then came the order in a voice that rung through the mountains:

"One, two, three, fire!"

The six revolvers flashed as one weapon, and the six bullets almost went as one into the forehead of the soldier.

Without a moan, he sank in his tracks, and Major Mephisto said, calmly:

"For the courage that man showed, bury him, and do not leave his body for the prowling wolves."

The six horsemen rode up to the body, and, dismounting, bore it away.

"Now, Major Mephisto, I suppose we are at liberty to go on our way?" said Buffalo Bill.

"Not yet, sir."

"Do you seek another victim?"

"No, sir, not a victim."

"What then?"

"A hostage."

"Who do you want as a hostage?"

"One of the passengers."

"And a hostage for what?"

"For one I desire to get possession of."

"I suppose that you wish to keep me as a hostage?"

"No."

The two stood by the side of the coach, and all heard what was said.

"I trust this miner does not wear the mark that seems to have the same effect upon you that a red rag has on a bull?"

"You are inclined to be facetious, Mr. Cody. But that miner does not wear the fatal tattoo, for, as I said, I never forget a face, and I never saw him before to-day."

"You surely are not going to deprive us of our driver, Reckless Ben?"

"No; though I found a driver once who had the fatal tattoo, and he shared the fate of your soldier comrade."

"Then who, sir, is it that you claim for a hostage?"

"Miss Yulee."

"What!" and Buffalo Bill's face flashed up with a dangerous light.

"Yes, sir, I shall claim Miss Yulee as a hostage."

"Be a man and take me. By Heaven, step off there ten paces and meet me, and let it decide whether you shall do so cowardly an act," cried the scout.

"Be calm, Mr. Cody, for I am no coward. I mean no harm to Miss Yulee."

"I wish to take her as a hostage that this red work may end, and I shall make a demand upon her father, and see what the result will be."

"My father is poor, sir, and can pay no large ransom for me," said Ethel, with a manner that was strangely calm.

"The ransom I ask, Miss Yulee, is not gold, but flesh and blood."

"What do you mean, sir?"

The Hussar chief took from his pocket an envelope and a sheet of paper.

Upon the latter he wrote a few lines, placed it in the envelope, and sealed it.

This he addressed to

COLONEL YULEE,

Commandant Fort Advance.

Kindness

BUFFALO BILL, Chief of Scouts.

"Mr. Cody, if you will deliver that to Colonel Yulee, he will give you an answer. That answer you can bring to me by this stagecoach, or you can give it to Reckless Ben to deliver to me. Upon the response of Colonel Yulee depends his daughter's freedom."

Buffalo Bill took the envelope and placed it in his pocket, while he said:

"Let me be your hostage, Major Mephisto, to gain what point you wish."

"No; Miss Yulee alone will do."

"I will go, Mr. Cody, so do not say more; but I suppose I can at least carry my traveling satchel with me, if I am to be your prisoner, Major Mephisto?"

"Certainly, Miss Yulee, for my desire is to treat you in every respect as you deserve."

"Take me, sir, for I am an old woman, and she is a dear young girl who——"

"You won't do, madam," was the laconic response of the Hussar chief, though he added:

"I thank you, however, for your offer."

There was grim humor in this that seemed to amuse Reckless Ben; but his smile faded when Major Mephisto said, sternly:

"I am ready for my hostage, Miss Yulee."

"I am ready, sir," and Ethel Yulee was as cool as an icicle, as she stepped from the coach, after bidding her feminine companion good-by.

"I say, major, yer is kinder crowdin' things in doin' as you is now, takin' this young leddee a prisoner. I has stood up fer yer as ther gentlemanest road agent I ever sec, or heard tell on; but when yer takes a leddee from my



coach, I is down on yer fer keeps," and Reckless Ben spoke in very earnest tones.

"I mean the lady not the slightest harm, Ben, and I shall treat her with the respect that I would my mother; but I wish Colonel Yulee to grant me certain demands I have asked him in my note, and I take his daughter as a hostage to force him to do so."

"My father is not one to be driven to do anything, you will find," said Ethel, with spirit.

"Where his daughter, an only child is at stake, he will yield, I think," was Major Mephisto's response.

"Well, I thinks it's a mean trick, and some day when I hears you is hanged, I'll be glad," said Reckless Ben.

The Hussar chief laughed lightly, and replied:

"Come, Ben, hand out the baggage that this lady wishes to carry with her.

"I am sorry I have no side saddle for you, Miss Yulee, as you will have to ride."

"My own saddle I brought with me, and it is with the bridle and my riding habit in that hamper," said Ethel.

She gave the key to Reckless Ben, and the articles were taken out, the maiden throwing the skirt over her head and fastening it about her waist.

One of the Hussars then dismounted, and the side saddle and bridle were placed on his horse, and Ethel was lifted to her saddle by Buffalo Bill, who whispered:

"Keep up a good heart, for I will be on your trail within the hour."

"Thank you," she whispered.

The satchel which the maiden wished to carry was then handed out and slung to the saddle of another of the Masked Hussars.

"You can drive on now, Ben, and, Mr. Cody, the sooner you deliver that letter to Colonel Yulee that much sooner will his daughter regain her freedom."

"It shall be delivered in good time, Major Mephisto," was the scout's reply, as he raised his sombrero to Ethel.

Then Ben called to his horse and the coach rolled on, Buffalo Bill on the box with the driver.

"Waal, pard, wasn't thet done prime?"

"Yes, Ben; that is a dangerous man to have on a trail," replied the scout.

"But hain't he a gentleman?"

"He certainly possesses very elegant manners."

"He nailed thet poor soldier?"

"Yes."

"And he got thet colonel's darter."

"He has, indeed; but he may not be able to hold her."

"Not ef you takes thet trail, Bill; but lordy, hain't I glad ter meet yer, and say I knows yer now, for I has heerd of you for years. Does yer know, I has heerd so much o' your doin's, I 'spected ter see yer jist whip out yer guns and begin on thet whole gang."

Buffalo Bill laughed and replied:

"I have got some sense, Ben; but I wish you to do something for me."

"I'll do it, Bill."

"When we halt a few miles further on, I'll write a line to Colonel Yulee, and you send one of the men at the station at once with it, for I shall put Major Mephisto's note in it."

"I'll do it."

"And don't speak of Miss Yulee's being captured by

the Hussars, but leave her trunks at the station, and her father will send immediately for them."

"I will also ask the miner and the old lady to say nothing about it, as it is best it be not known, for the settlers might attempt a rescue and thwart what the colonel will do."

"That is so, Bill; but can you tell me how it is that this Major Mephisto can watch the five Overland trails as he does?"

"Does he?"

"He do, indeed, for the drivers have all been stopped by him off and on, though my trail, being the main line, catches it the most."

"Well, Ben, we must solve the mystery in some way.

"Have you not a stage envelope with you?"

"I has, under the seat box, and paper, too."

The stage soon came to a halt, and getting out the paper and envelopes, Buffalo Bill took a pencil and wrote a long note to Colonel Yulee.

In the envelope he placed the note of the Hussar chief, and sealing it, addressed it to Colonel Yulee.

"Give a man this twenty-dollar bill, Ben, and tell him to push on with all speed for the fort.

"He will bring an answer, and it will be given to you."

"But how will you get it?"

"I will meet you on your back trip somewhere, Ben."

"All right, pard; but what is you goin' ter do now?"

"Deprive you of your leaders," answered the scout, with a smile.

"Lordy, Bill, but you is iron lightnin' about ter strike."

"I hope I will be able to strike right, Ben."

The horses were now unharnessed, and the harness thrown upon the coach, and the saddle, bridle and pack saddle of Buffalo Bill were handed out, along with his repeating rifle.

Ben helped him to rig out his horses, who seemed glad of the change, and then Grip bounded out of his place of hiding, where he had been securely hidden, his presence unsuspected by any one in the coach or the Masked Hussars.

"Good-by, Ben."

"Good-by, Bill, and luck to yer," replied the driver, and the stage rolled on, leaving Buffalo Bill in the Overland Trail, but prepared for whatever might turn up in his way.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TWO LETTERS.

Buffalo Bill had been gone for some days from Fort Advance, and, since the soldier had returned, whom he rescued from the Hussars, they had had no news from him.

This caused some anxiety, for all understood that it was a case of one man against many, and the warning of the Hussars the scout was the last man in the world to heed.

The colonel and Captain Vaughan often talked the matter over, and they were engaged in doing so one night, as was their wont before retiring, when the orderly came in and said:

"A courier, sir, and he says it is most important."

"Admit him."

The orderly disappeared to soon return and usher in a man in buckskin.



He looked like one who had ridden hard, and he said, quickly:

"Are you ther colonel, sir?"

"Yes, my man."

"I has a letter here fer you as Reckless Ben give to me about sunrise ter give ter your own hands only, and he old me not to let ther grass grow under me while I were comin', and I didn't."

"Who are you, my man?" asked the colonel, as the courier was fumbling for the letter.

"I is Stable Joe, up at the old Hearse Station."

"And who is Reckless Ben?"

"Lordy! hain't yer heerd o' Reckless Ben?"

"No."

"Then yer is away back in ignorance, fer Reckless Ben are ther boss driver on ther Overland, and runs ther doggondest rainbow hearse I ever seen. He sails out o' Prairie City, and keeps clean through to Land End City, and——"

"But the letter."

"Yas, here it are, fer it got mixed inter my duds in some way, Pard Colonel," and the odd genius handed out the letter which Buffalo Bill had given to Reckless Ben to forward for him. He give me a twenty fer bringin' it, too, and thar's a answer to go back."

"All right, I will call you when it is ready."

"Orderly!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take Mr. Stable Joe out and have him given a good supper and his horse fed."

"Thet's music," said Stable Joe, with a grin, as he followed the orderly, whom he seemed to think was a greater personage than the colonel.

Hastily breaking open the envelope, Colonel Yulee glanced at the contents, and his face became pale.

Then he said:

"Vaughan, listen to this."

"It is from Cody," and he read aloud the scout's letter, telling of the death of the soldier, the capture of Miss Yulee, and Buffalo Bill's intention of trailing the Hussars.

"My God! what a blow!" cried the colonel, as he finished reading the letter.

"How fortunate, sir, that Cody was there!"

"Fortunate indeed! but I feel assured he will do all man can do."

"My poor child! how she must suffer!"

"He will treat her with respect, sir; but what of Major Mephisto's letter?"

"True, what of his letter?" and the colonel quickly tore it open, though the brave man's hand trembled as it did so, as no deadly peril to himself could have caused it to tremble.

In a bold hand was written as follows:

OVERLAND TRAIL,  
Friday.

COLONEL ROYAL YULEE, Commandant Fort Advance.

SIR:—This will be placed in your hands by your chief of scouts, Buffalo Bill, and I write to inform you that I have in my keeping your daughter, Miss Yulee, whom I will hold as a hostage until you grant my demand upon you.

That demand is that you deliver into my hands an officer now in your command.

If he is a man, he will consent to it, rather than have me hold for one moment your daughter captive.

If he is not, you will have to deliver him to me if you desire to see your daughter again.

Let him ride out from the fort with Buffalo Bill, and meet me at the point from where I send this letter on Sunday next at noon.

I will be there with Miss Yulee, and place her in charge of the scout.

If you attempt to send others, my scouts will know, and you will thwart the end you wish.

The one I seek is Lieutenant Hobart Otey.

If you refuse, an answer will reach me if delivered to Reckless Ben, the Overland driver.

I have the honor to be

MAJOR MEPHISTO,  
The Masked Hussar.

For some moments neither the colonel nor Captain Vaughan spoke, and then the former called out:

"Orderly!"

"Sir!"

"Ask Lieutenant Otey to come to me at once;" and the voice of Colonel Yulee was hoarse with feeling.

"Well, Vaughan, this is most remarkable," said Colonel Yulee, when the orderly had gone after Lieutenant Otey.

"It is indeed, sir."

"What does it mean?"

"I am at a loss to know."

"I will find out when Otey comes, for he must know." Captain Vaughan shook his head.

"You think not?"

"I hardly know what to think, sir."

"What can this man want with Otey?"

"I cannot ask him to give himself up to have my child returned to me."

"The Mephisto has struck the right chord, Colonel Yulee, when he says that if he is not a coward he will do so."

"You think that he should?"

"Miss Yulee is suffering for some reason known to Otey, and therefore for him, and he should free her, at any sacrifice to himself."

"I am at a loss to understand it, sir."

"You think so?"

"I do, sir."

"Ah! here is Surgeon Powell, and I will see what he thinks, for I am glad he came in, as his level head always gives me good advice."

"Ah, colonel, I am glad to find you up, sir, for I felt anxious about Cody, seeing a courier arrive," said Frank Powell, as he entered.

"Sit down, Powell, and let me ask your advice."

"Read the letters, please," and he handed him the one written by Buffalo Bill.

As Surgeon Powell began its perusal the colonel said:

"Vaughan, ask the orderly to request Lieutenant Otey to wait in your room a few minutes, if he should arrive before Powell reads the letters."

Captain Vaughan obeyed and returned to his seat, and his eyes and the colonel's were fixed upon the surgeon's face.

But no more than a wounded soldier could glance up into his face and read his fate, could they see there any expression of his thoughts.

His stern, handsome face was immobile, and he laid aside the scout's letter and took up the one written by Major Mephisto without the slightest expression revealing his feelings.

"Well, Powell?"

"Colonel, this is remarkable, sir."

"It is."



"Have you seen Otey?"

"I just sent for him."

"He can do but one thing."

"And that?"

"Give himself up."

"You think so?"

"By Heaven! Colonel Yulee, there is nothing else as a man that he can do."

"So Vaughan says."

"So any one but a coward would say, sir."

"It being my child that is in the hands of the outlaws, and one of my officers whom the demand is made upon, I am not a competent judge as to what should be done."

"I am, sir, and I say frankly that Otey is a coward if he hesitates an instant," hotly said the gallant surgeon.

"But this Mephisto may mean to kill him."

"It matters not, sir; he has no right to hesitate when Miss Yulee is held for his sake."

"But will he?" anxiously asked the colonel.

"He shall certainly not hesitate from not knowing what I deem it his duty as a man, a soldier, an officer to do."

"Nor mine," added Captain Vaughan, glad to be so strongly backed up by the bold surgeon.

"I am glad to have your opinion, so please remain, but say nothing until Otey has been thoroughly put to the test."

"Vaughan, please ask Lieutenant Otey to come in, for he is outside."

A moment after Lieutenant Otey entered.

He looked a trifle pale, and seemed nervous at being sent for at so late an hour.

"I had retired, Colonel Yulee, and so was forced to detain you, sir," he said.

"You are in ample time, Lieutenant Otey."

"Be seated, please."

The officer obeyed, glancing quickly at Captain Vaughan and then at Surgeon Powell, to see what it all meant.

But their faces revealed nothing, and Colonel Yulee continued:

"Lieutenant Otey, I have here two very strange letters, and they concern me vitally, as well as yourself, and I desire that you read their contents thoroughly and see what is best to be done."

"This one is from Buffalo Bill."

The lieutenant took the letter, and his hand showed a tremor as he did so.

He read it through without a word, but when he was handed the second letter his face turned livid, and his hand trembled so he rested his arms upon the table.

"This is infamous, Colonel Yulee," he said, fiercely.

"It is, Lieutenant Otey."

"Why, that man is a fool to wish to get me into his power through holding Miss Yulee as a hostage."

"It is a remarkable proceeding, sir; but who is this Major Mephisto, Otey?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"Cannot, or will not?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Have you no enemy that you could place as this man?"

"None, sir."

"You are sure?"

"Unless it be——"

"Who?"

"That Sergeant Drew."

"Sergeant Drew was executed, Lieutenant Otey."

"It has never been proven, sir, that he was killed."

"He must have been killed, or wounded at least, and the Indians carried him off."

"His body was not found, sir."

"True; but why do you suspect this Major Mephisto of being Sergeant Drew?"

"I hardly know, sir."

"Why should Sergeant Drew be the soldiers' foe that this man is?"

"I cannot tell, sir."

"And what has Sergeant Drew against you now, Otey if he be alive?"

"I do not know, Colonel Yulee."

"Well, Lieutenant Otey, what can we do in this matter?"

"I am at a loss to tell you, sir," was the low reply, and at his words the eyes of Frank Powell flashed ominously.

Lieutenant Otey seemed deeply moved at the position he found himself in, and he glanced furtively at the colonel, and then at the two other officers.

He saw that Colonel Yulee wore a stern expression, and Captain Vaughan had a sneer upon his lip; but the expression on Frank Powell's face he liked least of all.

"Lieutenant Otey, this is a most unfortunate affair, sir," said the colonel, breaking the ice after the last remark of the officer, which showed that he had not entertained the thought of going to give himself up to release Miss Yulee.

"It is indeed, sir."

"It seems that you could tell me more about this matter if you would."

"What more could I tell you, sir?"

"That is what I wish to know, lieutenant, just what you can tell."

"I can tell nothing, sir."

"You surely know if you have any enemy who would do so desperate a deed to get you into his power."

"I suggested the sergeant, sir."

"He was not unfriendly to me, sir, so why capture my daughter, for I tried hard to save him?"

"Yes, sir, I know that the court-martial tried to prevent his execution, though compelled to sentence him."

"It was because they thought there were circumstances in the favor of the sergeant that did not come out at the trial. He held his lips, and you said nothing, and it was not understood how he could deliberately have run his sword into you, meeting you out in the timber as he did, and then placed himself in jeopardy by bringing you home."

"I could not understand his strange action, sir."

"Unless it was manliness in him," quietly said Surgeon Powell.

"Well, Otey, what are we to do, for, be the man whom he is, he holds my daughter in his power on your account?"

"If you will let me take a company, sir, I will attempt her rescue."

"Buffalo Bill says nothing must be done."

"He is not the best judge, as he prefers to rescue her alone and thus add to his fame."

"Well, he has the pluck to attempt it against tremendous odds, Otey."



"True, sir; but why not let us at once begin a war on these Hussars?"

"Because five hundred men could not catch them in those mountain fastnesses, and, if driven to it, they would go to the renegade Red Heart, and thus escape. No, they must be taken by just such men as Buffalo Bill, and I believe that he, Hawk-Eye Harry, Poker Paul, and a few others like them, could accomplish what my entire force could not do."

"It may be, sir; but it is a pity to leave Miss Yulee in the power of this man a moment longer than is necessary."

"So I think," said Frank Powell, dryly.

"And I," added Grayson Vaughan.

"He says he will hold her until he gets you in his power."

"I shall take good care that he does not get me in his power, Colonel Yulee, for he would put me to death, I am sure."

"But what about Miss Yulee, who is held as a hostage for you, Otey?" asked Frank Powell.

"I can give no advice, for I do not know what to say."

"I could give a little advice."

"Well, Surgeon Powell?"

"I will not offer it as advice, for I never give advice unasked, but I will tell you what I would do if placed in your position."

"Well, sir?"

"I would go at once, find Buffalo Bill, ask him to meet the Mephisto with me, and deliver myself up, releasing Miss Yulee as a hostage."

"Are you aware, sir, that he would kill me, while Miss Yulee is in no danger?"

"Suppose he might, is it not better to take your chances, than to have Miss Yulee, a young girl of refinement and education, forced to remain among a band of outlaws in a mountain retreat? By Heaven, Otey, but I'd rather give my life than have a woman thus suffer for act of mine."

"But I have done nothing whatever to cause this."

"That is not the question, sir; he demands you in return for his fair captive, and you should go and surrender yourself, be the result what it may to you."

"I will first see what the scout accomplishes, for I have great hopes that Buffalo Bill can work wonders."

"Procrastination makes cowards of us all, Otey," hotly said Surgeon Powell.

"Do I understand you as referring to me as a coward, Surgeon Powell?"

"My dear Lieutenant Otey, if your mirror revealed you to yourself as I see you, you would not ask that question."

"Then you intend it as an insult?" hotly said Lieutenant Otey.

Frank Powell was now perfectly calm, and looking the officer straight in his face, he said, slowly:

"Otey, I have been mistaken for you often, as you have for me."

"We are the same size, the same form, and have a bearing alike, while our faces are said to be as similar as though we were twin brothers."

"But if I thought my nature was like yours I would go out in the first thunderstorm and try to be struck by lightning!"

"This is outrageous, Surgeon Powell; and he insults me, Colonel Yulee, in your presence."

"I beg Colonel Yulee's pardon," and Frank Powell bowed low and turned to leave the room.

"And you shall take back your words to me, sir, or must abide the consequences," hotly said Hobart Otey.

Frank Powell turned, and said in the soft-voiced manner natural to him, and wholly unmoved:

"I never so far forget myself, Lieutenant Otey, to say aught to a brother officer that I have to retract—in fact, I never eat my words," and Surgeon Powell saluted Colonel Yulee and left the quarters.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE CAPTIVE.

When Ethel Yulee saw the stagecoach drive away and leave her alone, in the power of the Masked Hussars, her brave spirit almost sunk within her at the thought.

But she made up her mind to face the ordeal with a fearless heart, and she felt a perfect confidence in Major Mephisto, that he would treat her with the greatest respect.

Whatever his nature might be, in carrying out his vengeance, his cruelty in coolly taking the life of a human being, he certainly appeared the man to protect her, and not treat her with disrespect.

"I am ready, Miss Yulee, and permit me to express my deep regret at having to do as I have done," and the Hussar leader spoke in the tone of one who meant his utterances.

"I also regret it, sir; but I fear I shall have to remain long upon your hands, for my father is not one to sacrifice one of his officers, even to save his daughter."

"Miss Yulee, I feel that; but I have done as I did to try and force the officer I told you of, to come forward and rescue you by himself coming forward that you might be released."

"He will hardly do so, sir, where he knows that death awaits him, and I certainly would not wish it."

"It is very kind of you to say so, to offer to sacrifice yourself for him; but if he has the manhood I hope he has, he will certainly at once release you by coming and delivering himself into my hands."

"I shall urge against it, for better that I should suffer inconvenience for awhile than that he should lose his life."

"Do you know any of your father's officers?"

"I met one, Captain Vaughan, several years ago."

"A splendid fellow he is too."

"Then he is not the object of your hatred, sir?"

"No, indeed."

"I am glad to hear this, for I have always liked Captain Vaughan, and my father seems very fond of him."

"Yes, and from what I know of him he would be the man, if he was the one I had in view, to at once come and give himself up to free you, and Surgeon Frank Powell, Captain Talbot, and in fact many more would do the same."

"You seem to know the officers of the fort well, sir."

"I know some of them, and I think you will enjoy life there. Your father is a whole-souled gentleman and a perfect soldier. Captain Vaughan is one of Nature's noblemen, and he is a young bachelor. Captain Talbot



is a fine fellow, but married, and Surgeon Frank Powell is a king among men, but is engaged to be married, I believe, to a lady East. Then there are plenty of younger officers, some older ones, and the garrison is a charming place to live."

"I am sorry that you prevent me from ascertaining how true your praise is."

"I am sorry, too, Miss Yulee; but I am determined to get possession of that man, and I feel that I can only do so through you; but see, is not this grand scenery about you?"

"It is indeed, sir; but may I ask where you are taking me?"

"To my retreat, the Home of the Hussars."

"Is it far from here?"

"Not very; but I am going to ask you to permit me to blindfold you, when we arrive a mile nearer, for should you escape and desire to lead a force against me, you would know just how to reach my home."

"I must submit, sir; but it seems a pity to shut out this beautiful scenery."

"It will be but for a short while, I assure you."

The scene about them was now grand, for they were moving down the mountain side toward a beautiful valley.

Through it ran a river, in a bold, rocky bed, and at times with overhanging, clifflike banks.

As they neared this river, Major Mephisto said:

"Now permit me to make a bandage of your veil, Miss Yulee."

She offered no resistance, and he securely bound it over her eyes.

After a ride of half a mile they came to where a chasm in the high bank formed a pathway to the river.

Here the Hussars dismounted, and the chief lifted Ethel Yulee from the saddle.

"Now, Miss Yulee, as we have to walk, and you are blindfolded, accept my arm, please."

He asked with the courtesy of a cavalier, and Ethel did as he requested.

It was quite a walk along the river-bank, the Hussars following on foot.

At last they came to where the bank was very high and precipitous, and the river rushed along many feet below. A hundred feet away was an island, also with precipitous banks.

The island was rocky, and yet there was a heavy growth of timber upon it, while in the center were hills rising a hundred feet in height.

There were perhaps thirty acres on the island, but that human foot had ever trod there no one would have believed had they not seen the manner of reaching it.

Arriving at a clump of trees that grew on the bank Major Mephisto placed a bugle to his lips and blew three sharp blasts.

Almost instantly they were answered from the island, and soon after a man appeared upon the other shore.

In his hand he held a huge bow, with an arrow set.

Without particular aim he fired, and the arrow fell near the group of Hussars.

Instantly one seized it, and there was a string attached.

Drawing upon it he soon held a rope in his hand.

Another arrow was then fired, and it, too, had a string attached, and which also was made fast to a rope.

Two Hussars then began to draw hard, hand over hand,

while two more took up the arrows and fired them back to the island, where two men then seized them and began to draw in the rope, which had been passed around two trees near the bank upon the main shore.

Several Hussars were now drawing upon the ropes and soon a narrow bridge was drawn across the river, the men on the island making their end of the ropes fast where it had reached well across.

The bridge was of ropes, with a bottom of small poles for the footing, and two hand-ropes, one on each side, protected the one who went across from falling.

It looked frail indeed, but it was substantial enough to hold half a dozen men at a time, and the time taken in throwing it across from bank to bank was not more than fifteen minutes.

"Now, Miss Yulee, come with me and have no fear."

"Place your hands upon the ropes you feel on either side and let me lead you."

Blindfolded as she was, Ethel obeyed, and though she knew the footing was frail, and she must be high over the river, she never quailed.

But a sigh of relief escaped her as she got to the island shore and felt firm land beneath her feet.

After leading Ethel a short distance into the interior of the island, Major Mephisto said:

"Now, Miss Yulee, I will relieve you of that bandage on your eyes."

As soon as she could see she glanced about her.

She saw a pretty little woodland scene, a small vale, as it were, in the island.

There were horses just then passing near, and she saw that they and their trappings were dripping wet, which showed that they had crossed to the island by swimming, for she recognized the animals as those of the Hussars, and among them the one she had ridden.

In the vale there were some rudely-built cabins, half a dozen in number, with one off to itself, which was larger and better than the others.

"Miss Yulee, there is your home while you are my guest," and Major Mephisto pointed to the cabin.

"It is a pretty spot," she said, really enjoying the little camp scene.

"Yes, and not an unpleasant home for hunted men."

"The cabin is mine, and you will find it comfortable, and you need not feel that you are inconveniencing me for I can turn in with my officers, whose hut is equally as good—you see it there among those pines."

They had now reached the cabin, and the chief threw open the door, bowed, and walked away.

He had gone but a few steps when he turned and said:

"Miss Yulee, by glancing about you, you will see that I have quite a little band of Hussars, and their eyes will be upon you, should you attempt to leave the island."

"There is but one way you can reach it in safety, and that is the way I brought you."

"To attempt to leave it would be your certain death."

"If there is anything you need, simply call, and I will send you my cook who will prepare your meals and obey your bidding, in all except aiding you to escape."

Bowing, the chief retired and a man in uniform and mask soon after approached.

She could not see whether he was white or black, but he was polite, and it seemed to Ethel that he spoke with a negro accent.



He set about getting supper with the air of one who understood his business, and as Ethel gazed at the broiled quail, venison steak, coffee and biscuit she felt hungry in spite of her surroundings.

As the night was a little cool the cook built a large log fire in the cabin and lighted a lamp that hung over a table in the center.

Any questions regarding the band and the island were not responded to; but in all else the cook was most polite.

As she could get no information from inquiries, she determined to do so from observation, and she set about counting the men and horses on the island, though not appearing to do so, for, she said to herself:

"It may be useful, and I am sure that that daring and handsome scout has not deserted me."

And Ethel Yulee was right—he had not.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BY SIGHT AND SCENT.

When Buffalo Bill was left in the Overland Trail he at once decided upon his course of action.

So sure was he that the Hussars would at once move to their retreat, wherever that might be, he did not hesitate to hastily gallop back to the spot where the coach had been halted.

Having seemed in no hurry to depart, Major Mephisto was not over a mile away from the spot when Buffalo Bill reached it.

"Take the scent, Grip, and what you cannot find out with your nose, I will try my eyes on," said the scout.

Grip seemed to understand fully just what was expected of him.

He had not been particularly pleased with his ride on the coach, and was now anxious to attend to business.

He was allowed to go ahead as far as the length of the lariat, and, having taken the trail, looked back at the scout with the air of one who knew it all.

"On, Grip!"

And on Grip went, silently and surely following the trail, as though it was plainly visible to the naked eye.

At length it struck a rocky cañon, and but for Grip the trail would surely have been lost, for no track could be made on the hard soil.

Grip, however, went by scent, and so continued on until at length he came to the hill descending to the valley.

Instantly the scout drew back in the shelter of the thicket of pines, and, hiding his horses, took his field-glass and leveled it upon the valley.

What had caused him to draw quickly back was the sight of the Hussars in the valley.

He saw Ethel riding by the side of the chief, and the man whose horse she rode was riding behind one of his comrades, while another carried his saddle and bridle, and a third the satchel the maiden had brought with her.

Watching them closely through his glass, Buffalo Bill saw them halt at the river-bank.

Here all dismounted, and the horses, seeming to know what was expected of them, walked down a gully washed through the bank to the water's edge.

Here the scout lost sight of the horses, but he beheld the party on foot walking along the bank.

Arriving at the little clump of timber, he saw them halt, and, though too far to see just what was done, he beheld the rope bridge drawn across and the maiden and the Hussars cross on foot.

At the same time he saw the riderless horses landing at the upper end of the island and going up into the interior.

Once the Hussars had disappeared from sight Buffalo Bill beheld two men on the island release the bridge ropes, and gradually lowering on them the bridge, in some mysterious way, was dragged back to the island shore again.

"So far so good. The horses go alone to the island; I suppose it is because the waters are too rough for them to carry a rider, and perhaps it is to prevent the horseman from getting wet through. The men come down the bank, give some signal, and the ropes are thrown across and the bridge is stretched. It is a clever little scheme; but I do not despair of getting upon the island. I'll camp just opposite to that bridge and then I'll know who comes to and fro. If I could only catch two of those Masked Hussars together, I think I could show them a little game that would surprise them."

So saying, the scout returned to his horses, and mounting, rode back along the mountain range.

At last, after a great deal of trouble, he reached a point opposite to the island, and where the bridge had been stretched.

His first care was for his horses, and he soon found them a most luxuriant place to feed and rest, with a spring at hand with the clearest, coolest water.

Grip was given the length of his lariat and left tied to a tree, and the scout made his way to a point of lookout and once more turned his glass upon the island.

Though he was upon a high piece of ground, he could not see within the island, only the impenetrable timber that shut the interior in as with a wall.

"The horses swim down, the men cross on that movable bridge, and the animals cannot get back against that current, so swim to a point below, I am sure."

"I must find that point to-morrow, as the Hussars may depart that way; but from here I can see pretty well who goes to or leaves the island."

"To-night I will have a close look at those banks."

Having decided upon this, as twilight was falling, the scout went back into the hills and prepared his supper.

Then he led his horses to water, staked them out for the night, and, unstrapping his pack, spread a small canvas covering, and made his bed beneath it.

Having completed his arrangements for comfort, he took hold of Grip's lariat and set out for the river-bank.

Arriving at the gully, he saw that the horses had been trained to enter the river at that point and swim to the island.

Going down the bank opposite to the island, he stopped in the little clump of timber, of half a dozen trees, where he had seen the bridge stretched across the stream.

Then the scout moved on down the stream, and, after a walk of half a mile, came to a break in the clifflike bank.

Going down to the water's edge, he saw that there was a good landing there for a horse that might seek to come ashore, and turning his glass up toward the



island, he was sure that he had struck the spot where the animals swimming down from the island came out upon the shore.

Having satisfied himself upon how the horses reached the island and left it, and in regard to the means by which the Hussars crossed to and from the mainland, Buffalo Bill set out upon his return to his camp, hoping that the morrow would bring forth good fruit.

The sun was rising when Buffalo Bill awoke, for he was fatigued after his eventful day and night, and had slept soundly.

His first care was for his horses and Grip, and then he ate a cold breakfast, for he dared not build a fire in the daytime, fearing that the smoke would be seen.

Then the scout went to his point of lookout, and leveling his glass upon the island, he was delighted to see a horseman just leaving it from the lower end.

It was a Hussar, and he rode into the water, and his horse waded for some time, but at last began to swim.

He could come out at but one place, the scout decided, so he hastily went back and got his lariat and Grip.

Making his way quickly along the ridge, he reached a point where he commanded a view of the spot at which the man would land.

Hardly had he reached there when the Hussar came ashore.

His horse shook the water from him as a dog does, and then was guided almost directly toward the point where the scout was in hiding.

Buffalo Bill's keen eyes soon took in the lay of the land, and he saw that the horseman could only go through a narrow cañon, as he was then going, for the mountain there was too steep to force a horse up its sides.

The cañon was several hundred yards away, but the scout hastily ran there and glanced over the steep sides.

It was about thirty feet at that point to the pebbly bottom of the cañon, but the rocky walls were almost perpendicular.

Further on the cañon grew wider and deeper as it penetrated the mountain.

Along the edge of the canyon grew some stunted trees, and to one of these the scout quickly fastened his lariat and then held the noose end well in hand.

"He is compelled to pass within reach," he muttered.

And then he motioned to Grip, who was anxiously watching proceedings, to lie down and keep quiet.

A moment more and the horseman appeared in sight.

He was a large man, and was mounted upon a fine bay.

He wore the brass helmet and mask, but the visor was raised above his mouth, and he was singing a song as he rode slowly along.

His horse was dripping wet, but the horseman seemed to have kept his boots and legs dry.

Nearer and nearer he came, until he was right beneath the scout.

As he was passing on, the lariat was dexterously thrown and the noose settled over the head and shoulders of the Hussar.

Quick as a flash the coil was drawn tight, the startled horse bounded forward, and the rider, with his arms pinioned to his side, was swinging in midair six feet above the ground.

Bracing his feet firmly, the scout began to draw the heavy weight up hand over hand, while the Hussar, astounded, alarmed and helpless, could offer no resistance.

At length, by an exertion of superhuman strength, Buffalo Bill drew the Hussar over the edge of the cliff and said, as he hastily covered him with his revolver:

"You are my prisoner, my masked pard!"

"Buffalo Bill!" cried the man, in amazement.

"Yes; so men call me."

"I cannot understand it."

"Understand what?"

"How I was caught."

"The easiest way in the world, for I saw you leave the island, watched you land, and when you came in this direction, I knew you were my game."

"I own up I am caught; but none but you, Buffalo Bill, could ever have done it."

"You flatter yourself, pard, for plenty could, had they gotten the chance."

"Well, what do you intend to do with me?"

"Kill you."

"No, Bill."

"Oh, yes."

"You would not do that."

"What! would not kill one of a band who murders soldiers in cold blood?"

"Well, Bill, I know your nature, and you are not a man to kill from love of seeing blood."

"How do you know?"

"I know you well."

"Who are you?"

"One you once rescued from the Indians."

"I have had that pleasure so often I cannot exactly place you."

The man raised his visor and his face was revealed.

It was the face of a young man, not ill-looking, but bronzed and a trifle reckless.

"Hal Watts, it is you?" said Buffalo Bill, recognizing a young teamster whom he had once rescued from a band of Indians who meant to torture him to death.

"I'm Hal Watts, Bill, and many a night have we been in camp together, many a long mile have I followed your trail when you were guide for the prairie schooners."

"And now you are an outlaw?"

"Don't call it too hard, Bill, for I get pay, and I'm simply soldering under a captain who hasn't a commission; but, Bill, I have never forgotten you, and I never will."

"Better prove it by leaving this band of Hussars!"

"No, I'm enlisted for the war, and I can't desert."

"Unless death causes you to desert!"

"You wouldn't kill me, Bill!"

"You think so?"

"I know so."

"Don't carry that thought too far!"

The young man laughed, and said:

"If I was armed and fighting you, I wouldn't give a Sioux scalp for my life; but as I am your prisoner, whom you have disarmed, you wouldn't harm a hair of my head, Bill Cody."

"I can take you to the fort, and there you will find they will hang you."

"No, Bill, for the sake of old times you would not do that."



"I suppose you think I will let you go, for the sake of old times?"

"If you don't, I'll be swung up, sure, and you wouldn't want to see that, I know."

The man had always been most kind to Buffalo Bill, had seemed to regard him with real affection, after his rescue of him from a horrible death, so that the scout had liked him greatly.

This the prisoner seemed to remember, and he took his capture with great equanimity.

"Come, Watts, I wish to know from you all about the Masked Hussars."

"I am under oath there, Bill, and would die before I would tell you anything."

"Now, who is Major Mephisto?"

"The chief."

"I know that; but who is he?"

"Bill, I am under death-oath to tell nothing, and I will die before I do."

"You know that Major Mephisto has a captive on the island?"

"Yes."

"How has he treated her?"

"With the utmost respect."

"I expected it of him; but, Watts?"

"Yes."

"I wish to aid that lady to escape."

The Hussar shook his head.

"I mean it, Hal Watts; I wish to aid that lady to escape, and what is more, you shall help me," and the look of the scout showed that he meant all that he said. "You must help me in this matter, for you know it is not right for your leader to hold that lady prisoner."

"It don't seem so, Bill."

"If Colonel Yulee wished, he could lead his whole force here and crush you all."

"I could go and get men to come here and lay siege to the island, catching you all in there like rats in a hole."

"That's so, Bill."

"I could get the artillery from the fort here, cut off all escape, and in time hang the last one of you."

"I believe you."

"Now, I don't wish to do this, for your chief might say, if we attacked him, he would put Miss Yulee to death. Of course, if he did, no punishment would be too great for you all, for the soldiers would take the idea that you men had no right to allow him to do such a deed, and all of you would suffer."

"What do you want, Bill?"

"I wish you to show me how I can get on that island."

"You'd be killed."

"I'll take my chances on that."

"I could not show you, Bill."

"You can."

"How?"

"You do not suppose I would be such a fool as to go there as I am?"

"Well, how?"

"In your rig."

"No, Bill."

"I say yes."

The man shook his head.

"See here, Watts, I do not wish you any harm; but

I'll take you straight to the fort unless we can come to some compromise."

"The soldiers are very much enraged at the action of Major Mephisto in shooting their comrades, and I assure you they would visit quick punishment upon you."

"I can't betray the chief, Bill, if I die for it."

"I don't ask you to betray him."

"What, then?"

"I wish you to let me have your uniform and helmet."

"Well?"

"Then when it comes night you can go with me to the place where they cross to the island."

"Better not risk it, Bill."

"That is my lookout."

"And then?"

"I wish to cross to the island."

"But what for?"

"To see Miss Yulee."

"Is that all?"

"Well, I would like to look about me while there."

The man again shook his head.

"I see you are stubborn; so we will go to the fort."

"Hold on!"

"Well, sir!"

"I was sent away on duty."

"You'll never get there, Hal Watts."

"Don't talk that way, Bill, for you scare me."

"I mean it."

"What would you do with me while you go to the island?"

"Leave you here in camp."

"Bill, will you promise not to betray me under any circumstances?"

"Yes."

"Will you simply go to see Miss Yulee?"

"I'll go to see her, but I'll not promise to go blindfolded."

"I suppose I will have to submit."

"You must, or go to the fort."

"Well, I'll compromise the matter, and let you have them."

"All right."

"But you must leave me free in camp here."

"No, I shall see that you are here when I come back."

"Then I refuse."

"It is better for you, Watts, should I be taken, for I can show that I captured you, bound you and took your rig by force."

"That's so."

"It would be best."

"And you would say so, Bill?"

"Yes, if I am taken."

"All right. I'll just get out of my clothes and you can then tie me and put them on."

"Wait until night."

"All right."

And so the compromise was made, with all in favor of the scout.

When it began to get dark, the Masked Hussar took off his clothes and helmet, and Buffalo Bill put them on.

Then he tied the Hussar securely, and said:

"Now for full instructions, Watts!"

"Take that little bugle hanging to my belt, and, when you get to the cliff bank, blow three sharp blasts. If not



answered very soon, blow again three times, and so on until you are answered; but you will doubtless soon have a reply. When you get a reply, an arrow will be fired across the stream. Watch where it falls and pick it up; but before doing so, get a bow out of the third large tree on the cliff. You will find it in a hole in the tree, level with your head on horseback. The arrow will have a string attached, so draw on it until two ropes come to your hand. Pass one of these around the nearest tree on your right, the other around the tree upon your left, and make the ends again fast to the string tied to the arrow, which you are to fire back across the river. Those on the other side will haul the ropes over and make them fast there, when they have dragged the end of the rope bridge up to your bank. The bridge has hand ropes attached to it, which you are to make fast to trees on either side, and you can then walk across."

"And the men on the other side?"

"There may be only one on duty, but he will not speak to you; in fact, our Hussars are not allowed to talk on duty, unless necessary to do so. Once you get across, go straight toward the camp, and the chief's cabin is at the further end."

"Any guard there?"

"None, for none is needed."

"The chief is not there to-night?"

"No."

"And then?"

"See Miss Yulee, say what you wish and retrace your way; but, as you are going back, simply tell the man at the bridge that you will return in a short while."

"Well?"

"Cross the bridge, blow one blast when you are on this side, and the man will let go the ropes and haul the span back again."

"It is an ingenious affair, certainly."

"Yes, the work of the chief."

"Well, I shall be off now, and you may expect me back as soon as possible."

Mounting his horse, Buffalo Bill rode out of camp upon his perilous mission, leaving his prisoner securely bound to await his return, and with Grip standing guard over him.

The scout rode directly toward the spot where he had seen from the hills the Hussars cross the stream with Ethel Yulee.

He knew that he was taking big chances, but then he is one who enjoys danger, and never thinks of self where he can be of service to others or do a gallant deed.

He boldly rode up to the scattering clump of timber on the river bank.

Drawing rein, he listened for a few moment attentively.

The rush of the river, the cry of a night bird, the wind sighing through the pines, and the howl of a wolf back in the mountains, reached his ears; but no sound of a human voice.

Then he raised the bugle to his lips and gave the three sharp blasts he had been directed to blow by the Hussar.

No response came, and he repeated the signal at the end of a minute.

Immediately it was answered, and then he dismounted and hitched his horse.

As he stepped again to the river bank, he heard a whirring sound, and an arrow fell near him.

He picked it up and found a small, but strong twine attached.

Drawing upon it, he at length came to where it was attached to two ropes.

These he divided and passed around the trunks of two trees, one growing on either side near the bank and twenty feet apart.

Then he got the bow, and attaching the strings to the ropes once more, fired the arrow across.

It was successful thus far, for the ropes began to draw, and after a while a dark object came up to the edge of the bank and he pulled it over.

It was the bridge, and he soon had it made fast, along with the hand ropes.

It was a frail-looking structure, yet strong; but it required a cool head and ready nerve to go across.

Still the scout was not one to grow dizzy, and he stepped boldly upon the rope bridge, and, accustoming himself to the swaying motion, went across.

A man stood upon the other shore, and though in camp, he wore the uniform and helmet of the Hussars.

"I will return soon," said Buffalo Bill, and the one he addressed quietly sat down, as though to await his coming.

Passing on without hesitation, Buffalo Bill glanced eagerly about him.

A short walk revealed the camp, with several fires burning, yet so arranged under brush shelters as not to be seen away from the island.

By day the Hussars never allowed a fire to be built on account of the smoke betraying their presence.

Having discovered the arrangement of the camp, he espied the cabin of the chief and made his way thither.

If he was seen, no one noticed him, for not one would have believed it possible that other than a Masked Hussar could enter the camp.

At last he arrived at the cabin.

The door was closed, but a light was within, and he tapped lightly.

"Who is it?" asked the voice of Ethel Yulee.

"Open the door, please, for I have a message for you."

"Who are you?"

Buffalo Bill glanced about him, saw no one near, and said:

"I am Buffalo Bill."

"Ha!"

He heard the exclamation, then the quick step, and the bar was taken down and the door opened.

Instantly he stepped within, but Ethel Yulee started back with a cry of alarm, while she said:

"You have deceived me."

"No, Miss Yulee, I am in this disguise."

He raised the helmet from his head as he spoke, and she saw that he spoke the truth.

"You are a brave man, Buffalo Bill, to dare what you have this night."

"It was the only way that I could get here to see you, so I captured a Hussar, and here I am; but I must return at once, as the man at the bridge is awaiting me, and he thinks I am one of the band."

"Oh! if you should be taken!"

"I think there is little danger; but I came to see how



you were treated and to tell you that arrangements are being made to release you as soon as possible.

"Keep up a brave heart, and if we cannot get you free in one way, I will come as I have to-night and take you away."

"If I have to do so, my signal will be three knocks on the window to arouse you."

"But I hope we can release you without this risk."

"You are so good, Mr. Cody; but let me tell you that I am being treated well in every respect."

"Still, I long to be free and see my father, who, I know, is in great distress about me."

"But you must go now, so good-by—nay, do not remain a minute longer; and now that I have seen you, I have hope and shall not worry. Good-by."

She grasped his hand, and he at once left the cabin.

He made his way along the line of camps, saw the officers' cabins and those of the men, and passed enough Hussars to cause him to mutter:

"Major Mephisto has a large force."

"Where did he get them all, I wonder?"

One man spoke to him, but he muttered an unintelligible reply and passed on.

"I've done enough for one night," he said, and he returned to the bridge.

The one who had sat down to await his return was still there.

"From my knowledge of redskins, my idea is that this is one, for no white man has the patience to do what he has done."

"I will speak to him."

So said the scout to himself, and, emboldened by his escape thus far, he said:

"Any one gone over, pard?"

"Ugh!"

"I thought so," muttered Buffalo Bill, and he said in the Sioux tongue:

"Has any one else come over since I went by?"

"No," was the reply.

"That settles it; that pilgrim is a redskin, and I believe nearly all of Major Mephisto's band are."

And Buffalo Bill stepped upon the rope bridge.

Crossing over, he released the hand ropes, mounted his horse, returned the bow to its place, gave a single blast on his bugle, and rode back to camp.

He found his prisoner just as he had left him, and Grip on guard.

"All right, Watts, I have been there, and all was as you said."

"You can go now."

Half an hour after Hal Watts rode away from the scout's camp a free man.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RECKLESS BEN DELIVERS TWO LETTERS.

Reckless Ben was on his back trip, and he had an empty stage.

His horses, however, seemed to miss the splendid leaders they had had on the up run, and often had to be encouraged by the crack of the whip.

"Horses is like humans; jest give 'em a leetle help and they expects it all thier time," said Ben, taking in the situation very quickly.

He kept his eyes open all the time, for he expected to be halted by both Buffalo Bill and the Mephisto.

"That Buffalo Bill is a great one, and I'm o' ther opinion he'll run that Major Mephisto out o' the road agency biz' afore he is done with him."

"I expects ter see him afore long, 'cause he said as how he'd meet me; but then, he were alone and ther road agents were many, and maybe arter all thet he hev been tuk in."

"Ef so, I guess somebody got hoisted 'sides Buffalo."

A turn in the trail brought Reckless Ben in full view of a horseman.

"Ther scout, as I are a-livin'!" he cried, excitedly, and, whipping up his horses, he was soon near where the scout was seated on his horse.

"Ho, Bill, I are as tickled ter see you as though I had swallowed a feather. How is yer, how is yer?"

"All right, Ben; but the young lady is still in the hands of the Philistines."

"I am sorry about that; but you'll git her out, and no mistake."

"I hope so."

"I knows it."

"Have you a letter for——"

"Now I has; it were sent over from ther fort."

Taking a letter from his pocket, Reckless Ben handed it to Buffalo Bill, with the remark:

"I has one for Major Mephisto, too, and I'd like to know what are in it."

"Perhaps the colonel tells me what he has written to Major Mephisto," and the scout tore open his letter, which was addressed:

For Captain W. F. Cody,

"Buffalo Bill,"

Chief of Scouts,

Overland Trail.

Kindness Reckless Ben.

Opening the letter, Buffalo Bill read as follows:

MY DEAR CODY:—The officer whom this Major Mephisto demands, in return for my daughter, does not consider it his duty to free her by delivering himself into the hands of his enemies, or at least he wishes some little time to consider the matter, and that time I must grant.

You will have a better chance to act in the meantime, and I will so write to Major Mephisto that he will consider it the intention of Lieutenant Otey to deliver himself up, on a certain day, say to-morrow, Sunday week, at noon, at an appointed rendezvous.

I will keep you posted of all that occurs, by messengers to the station, and thence through Reckless Ben to your hands.

In the meantime I will ask you to do all in your power to rescue my loved child from her peril.

Vaughan joins me in remembrances and good wishes to you. Your friend,

YULEE.

Buffalo Bill read this letter attentively, and then gave Ben an idea of its contents.

"Now, Ben, I must go back to my camp and reconnoiter as soon as I know if Major Mephisto comes alone to get his letter from you."

"If he does, I ask no greater luck; but if he is not alone, then I shall remain out of sight, you may rest assured."

Ben laughed and said:

"I hopes he may be solitary, Bill; but good-by, and it's just three miles from here to whar I'm goin' ter meet Major Mephisto."

The coach rolled rapidly on, and Buffalo Bill followed at a canter.



He knew a trail that would cut off a mile and bring him near the scene, and he took it.

Approaching the spot where the Hussar chief was supposed to be, he dismounted and crept to a commanding position.

He had just reached his place of refuge when he heard the stage coming, and saw the Hussar chief ride out to meet it.

But he was not by any means alone, for his twelve horsemen were with him.

"That settles it," said the scout, and, regaining his horse, he rode rapidly away.

In the meantime Major Mephisto had received his letter from Reckless Ben.

It was short and to the point.

FORT ADVANCE, Saturday.

SIR:—You have done an act in the capture of my daughter which places you outside the pale of manhood, and for which I shall visit upon you the severest penalty when I have taken you prisoner, for sooner or later you will be in my power.

Your terms, for the restoration of my daughter, I have considered, and consulted with Lieutenant Otey about, and he desires until to-morrow, Sunday week, at noon, in which to deliver himself up to you, but it will be arranged just when and where, the communications being sent to you through Reckless Ben, the Overland driver.

I warn you that my child must be treated with the respect she deserves, and if otherwise, it will be the worse for you and yours. If you can think of any other arrangement for the restoration of my daughter than the giving into your hands of Lieutenant Otey, communicate with me.

ROYAL YULEE,

Commandant Fort Advance.

This letter the Hussar chief read carefully through, and then said to Reckless Ben:

"There is no answer other than that I shall expect Colonel Yulee to surrender Lieutenant Otey into my keeping on Sunday next."

"He'll do it, if he says so, you kin gamble on that, pard," responded Ben.

"Can you tell me where Buffalo Bill is?" asked the chief.

"Waal, now, I cannot, fer he left me at ther station and returned to ther fort," responded Ben, without the shade of a blush at the lie he told.

"Well, you just say to him that I warn him to keep off the trail of the Masked Hussars."

"Pard, I won't tell him, fer he's jist ther man ter strike yer trail if I does; but good-by, and bad luck to yer."

The Hussar chief laughed, and waved his hand as Reckless Ben drove on, muttering to himself:

"Now, he war too mean to come alone; but like as not Buffalo Bill hev got his eye right on him now."

"It's jist like him, and ef he hed come alone, I guesses ther colonel's darter wouldn't be a prisoner very long."

"Waal, thar is goin' ter be music afore long, and it are my opinion them Hussars will hev ter pay ther fiddler!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### AT THE FORT.

That he might understand the situation more fully, and also relieve the mind of Colonel Yulee regarding his daughter, Buffalo Bill decided to make a trip to the fort.

He found a spot on the bank of a stream that ran through a wild cañon in the heart of the mountains where

he could stake his extra horse out for the thirty-six hours that he would be absent.

He placed him so that he could get water from the stream, and the grass about him was most luxuriant and in great quantity, so that he would not need for food.

Some time before it was dark he mounted Hussar and set out for the fort, which he hoped to reach by midnight.

He pushed forward at a fair pace through the mountains, and, reaching the prairie, urged Hussar on at a rapid pace that he knew the horse could stand.

So well had he calculated that it was but a few minutes after midnight when he rode into the fort and asked to see Colonel Yulee.

He was taken by the officer on duty at once to the colonel's quarters, while his horse was given into the charge of a soldier, with instructions to rub him down for an hour and then feed and water him, for the noble animal had brought his master a long journey in splendid time.

Colonel Yulee was just about to retire, and the scout was admitted at once into his bedroom.

"Bless you, Cody, this is indeed a pleasure, but you bring me no bad news, I hope, of my child?"

"None, sir, but, on the contrary, good news."

"You have not rescued her?" and the colonel grew excited at the thought.

"No, sir," but I have seen her."

"Seen her!"

"Yes, sir, I paid her a visit."

"What! you dared invade the retreat of those men?"

"It was not difficult, sir, the way I managed it."

"Ha! you found some traitor in the band?"

"No, sir, but I captured a man, and found one who I knew, and had once served well. He would not betray his comrades, but compromised by telling me the way I could reach the island, on condition that I would do no harm, and simply visit Miss Yulee to cheer her up. Of course he meant that I should set him free when I came back from the island."

"The island?"

"Yes, sir, for they have the best retreat I ever saw, and an island in a river that runs through clifflike banks."

"Tell me of it, Cody."

Buffalo Bill related briefly his adventures at the island home of the masked hussar.

"I counted the men in camp as well as I could," he added, "and the major has fully a hundred; but my idea is that they are Sioux Indians from the renegades' camp, excepting a few white men who are the officers, and this is that he appears to be on the five overland trails about the same time. With the men in camp, and those evidently kept on the different trails, he must have at least a hundred, and ninety of them at least are Sioux."

"You surprise me, Cody."

"Well, sir, that is my idea, and yet he has the Sioux well drilled and under perfect discipline."

"He is a remarkable man."

"He is, indeed, sir; but when is Lieutenant Otey to get himself up?"

"Cody, I do not think that Otey has the slightest idea of doing so."

"And yet he calls himself a man?"

"True, but he feels that it is certain death for him



so, while he says the Hussars will not dare to harm Miss Yulee."

"He has no right to allow her to remain there as a stage for him, even if he was sure they would hang him."

"So Surgeon Powell told him, and I fear there will be trouble between the two, for you know what Frank Powell is if aroused in a good cause."

"Yes, Otey will find him more dangerous than he would Major Mephisto," said the scout.

"Well, I will write a letter to this Mephisto, by you, so you can give it to Ben, the driver, and I will make an appointment to deliver Otey to him on Sunday next. This shall keep matters quiet, and Otey appointed that time, though he has no idea, I believe of carrying it out. Still, I may misjudge him. In the meantime, if you can rescue Ethel, do so, but do not risk too much. If you can rescue her, it will be far better than having Otey go and give himself up, and terms with these outlaws are not to be made if it can be avoided."

"This is the best plan, colonel, and I will carry back your letter to-morrow, as I shall start about noon on my turn."

Thus it was arranged, and after dinner the following day Buffalo Bill started upon his return to the mountains, Surgeon Powell and Captain Vaughan accompanying him for half a dozen miles upon his way.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CHALLENGE.

There was bad blood among several of the officers at Fort Advance.

It was engendered by the action of Lieutenant Hobart Otey in declining to give himself up to the Masked Hussars, and thus at once free Ethel Yulee, who was held as a hostage on his account.

Colonel Yulee had been placed in a position where he could not say much to the officer, but Grayson Vaughan allowed the lieutenant to know his views, Captain Talbot, another of the officers stationed at the fort, had done the same, and Surgeon Powell had expressed himself in a manner so plain that Hobart Otey could not misunderstand his meaning.

The fact was that Surgeon Powell's high sense of honor made him speak out, and he was just the man, if placed in like position to Lieutenant Otey, to spring upon his horse and go to the Hussar camp to deliver himself up to his enemy, cost it him his life or not.

"There will be trouble between Powell and Otey yet, Vaughan," Captain Talbot had said to the adjutant the day following Buffalo Bill's visit.

"Otey will have to make it, then, for Powell has said he intends to, and that was enough to make a parson fight, so he will not refer to it again, and it rests with the lieutenant to resent it, or not, as he deems fit."

"He is a good deal of a bully, I have thought, and he owns his man, I guess; but he had best not force trouble on Frank Powell, for though our surgeon is the meek-tempered man in the fort, and as mild-mannered as a man, he is the worst man to arouse I ever saw."

"You are right; a friend can walk over him rough-shod, long as he does not touch him in a tender spot, but if

so, look out; but do you think Otey intends to give himself up?"

"No."

"Nor do I."

"What will Buffalo Bill do now, I wonder?"

"He will rescue Miss Yulee, my word for it, if some arrangement is not made soon; but here comes Powell."

Surgeon Powell now joined the two officers, who sat in front of Captain Talbot's cabin, and Grayson Vaughan asked:

"Well, Frank, what do you think Cody will do?"

"If he catches a Hussar, whose clothes will fit him, he'll get Miss Yulee out of the hands of Major Mephisto before Sunday comes."

"So I think," replied Captain Vaughan.

"And I," added Captain Talbot.

"But do you think Lieutenant Otey will give himself up?" asked the adjutant.

"Not I, or he would never have allowed himself to remain under the stigma of coward," was Surgeon Powell's quiet reply.

"You certainly spoke to him very plainly, Frank."

"I spoke as I felt, for I cannot understand a man allowing a young and lovely girl to remain in the hands of those outlaws, and not at once going and surrendering himself to free her, be his fate what it may."

"You are right."

"Yes, you are."

Such was the verdict of the two officers, and Surgeon Powell had just begun to speak, when Lieutenant Otey turned the corner and came toward them.

"Sh!" said Grayson Vaughan.

"There is Otey," whispered Captain Talbot.

But Frank Powell continued with what he was saying, without a change of muscle, simply adding:

"I was just speaking of you, Lieutenant Otey, and as I never say behind a man's back what I fear to say to his face, and you have appeared at this moment, I shall go on with my remarks."

"I was saying, Vaughan, that Lieutenant Otey knew his duty in this matter as well as any man, and his coward heart caused him to shirk it."

"He has asked for time to consider, and Colonel Yulee has granted it, though he had to compromise himself by writing to Major Mephisto and requesting a favor of him, an extension of time."

"But my opinion is that Lieutenant Hobart Otey will not then do as a brave man, a gentleman and an officer should, for it is not in him."

Lieutenant Otey had heard every word, and his face flushed and then paled.

He was a fine-looking man, in fact, strangely like Surgeon Powell in face and form, only there was not the manly, determined look in his countenance that was stamped in every feature of Surgeon Powell.

The lieutenant showed vacillation and cunning in his face, rather than the stamp of noble manhood.

But he was noted for his courage, and neither Grayson Vaughan nor Captain Talbot could see how he could eat the words thus thrown in his teeth.

They knew that Surgeon Powell was seeking no quarrel, and that he would not have said what he did had not Lieutenant Otey appeared and found him talking of him.

Then, like the brave man he was, he kept on.



They knew that he was one to avoid trouble, and had merely expressed his views in the matter, so they had come from his heart and upon impulse under excitement.

But could Hobart Otey allow the brand of coward to remain upon him?

That was the question, and the two captains glanced at him anxiously to note the result.

They were far removed from civilization, out in a border fort, and when a man there acted in a cowardly manner he must expect to hear of it in very plain language.

"Captain Talbot, as I would like this matter to remain a secret among those who now know it, for I believe, outside of ourselves now present and Colonel Yulee, no one else at the fort is aware of the capture of Miss Yulee, I will ask you to act as my friend in the affair which must be arranged between Surgeon Powell and myself. Will you do so, Captain Talbot?"

"Under the circumstances, Otey, I cannot refuse."

"Then I leave it in your hands to challenge Surgeon Powell to meet me, and to arrange weapons, place and time," and Hobart Otey turned on his heel and walked away.

An unpleasant silence followed his departure.

Frank Powell did not show the slightest sign that aught had occurred to mar his serenity; but Captain Talbot and Grayson Vaughan looked annoyed, and, in fact, deeply pained.

At length Captain Talbot said:

"You heard, Powell, what I was commissioned to do, and I accepted the unpleasant duty that, as Otey said, the secret might not become known to others."

"Do your duty, my dear Talbot, independent of any feeling of regard you may have for me," was Powell's response.

"Then I shall have to challenge you, in the name of my principal, Lieutenant Hobart Otey, to meet him upon the field of honor."

"I will accept, Captain Talbot, the challenge of Lieutenant Otey, though I regret exceedingly that it is necessary to do so. I spoke impulsively at first, and it angered me to see an officer hang fire when placed in the position in which he was. I cannot retract my words, for they are true, so I refer you to Captain Vaughan, whom I must ask to act for me."

"Certainly, Powell, and we will see what we can do to arrange it, for if Otey goes to Major Mephisto to deliver himself up, and thereby free Miss Yulee, you will withdraw your charge of cowardice?"

"Willingly, and beg his pardon, too."

"Then we will go and see him, so please wait here."

The two officers departed, and they were gone a very long while; but Frank Powell was reading a book and smoking, as though indifferent to the passing of time, or what the result of their interview with Lieutenant Otey would be.

When they returned their faces showed a lack of success.

"Well?" simply said the surgeon.

"I am sorry, Powell; but Lieutenant Otey says the affair cannot be arranged. He has told Colonel Yulee that he will do as regards Major Mephisto, and as you have called him a coward, he says you shall answer for it."

"As he pleases."

"Talbot suggested the fact that he might be dismissed from the service for fighting a duel, and he said that he had already sent in his resignation."

"As I have, and it has been accepted; but, as you know I am acting surgeon now at the request of Colonel Yulee, who requests me to remain until his surgeon and his assistant arrive."

"So you see neither Lieutenant Otey nor myself have aught to fear."

"Well, the affair must go on, so I will ask as to your choice of weapons, time and place?" Captain Talbot said.

"As to weapons, I do not care what are used—rifles, revolvers or swords; but suppose we say, as to time, to-night at sunset, over on the ridge yonder," and Surgeon Powell pointed to a timber ridge nearby.

Captain Vaughan and Captain Talbot at once agreed upon the place and time, and revolvers were the weapons chosen.

Grayson then went over to headquarters.

The colonel had gone off for a ride on the prairie, the orderly said, and a note had just been brought by a soldier, who said it was important.

"Who was the soldier, orderly?"

"Faith, sur, I was not afther takin' notice o' him, for they is all the same in looks."

The young captain smiled, and, entering the colonel's quarters, took up the note.

It was addressed:

Most Important!

For Colonel Yulee.

The writing was bad, the spelling worse, and it read:

There will be a fight with pistols betwene Doc Powel & Lieutenant Hobert Oty at the Timber Rige near the parade ground at sunset.

In his capacity as adjutant, Grayson Vaughan had a right to open the letter, and a glance showed him that it was written in a disguised hand.

"Heaven forbid that I wrong Otey, but I believe he wrote this, in this style, to appear to come from one of the men, that Colonel Yulee might have Powell and himself arrested."

"I will just keep this until after sunset."

And he placed it in his pocket.

At the appointed time Captain Vaughan went to the cabin of Surgeon Powell, and they mounted their horses and rode out upon the prairie.

Soon after Captain Talbot and Lieutenant Otey followed them, and the four met on the ridge, on the very spot where he had received his severe wound at the hands of Sergeant Dudley Drew.

It had been agreed that the surgeon and lieutenant should stand thirty paces apart, and at the word should each march ten paces forward, halting at marks placed for them.

Then, their revolvers being in their belts, the word should be given to draw and fire.

As they were awaiting their call to position Captain Talbot said in a low voice to Surgeon Powell:

"Vaughan says you intend to show mercy; but he vows he will kill you."

"Thank you."

And Frank Powell walked to his stand, throwing his cigar away as he did so, and wholly unconcerned.



Otey also took his stand, but his face was white, and he had a wicked look that boded no good for the surgeon, for it plainly said:

"I know I am a dead shot and that I can draw quickly, and I intend to kill you."

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" called out Grayson Vaughan, who had won the word.

"Ready!" came the response from each.

"Forward, march!"

"Halt!"

"Draw and fire!"

Quick as he was, the weapon of Lieutenant Otey was not leveled when the crack of Frank Powell's revolver was heard.

The lieutenant staggered back, tried to take aim at his foe, who stood motionless and calm, and then pulled the trigger.

The bullet missed its mark, and Hobart Otey fell to the ground.

Instantly Frank Powell was at his side and said in a kindly tone:

"Will you let me see to your wound, Otey, for I did not wish to kill you?"

"Yes, but I feel that I must die. Tell me the truth."

Frank Powell examined the wound carefully, and then said, calmly:

"You must die, Otey, and God knows I regret it."

"I feel that you do, Powell, and I deserve it at your hands; but I have something to say to you, if these gentlemen will leave us alone for a few minutes."

Captain Talbot and Grayson Vaughan at once retired, and the dying officer said in a low voice:

"I have a confession to make, and you must set me right after I am dead.

"It is in my pocket, so read it and do as you deem best."

Five minutes after, Frank Powell called to the two officers, for Lieutenant Hobart Otey was dead.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SCOUT AND THE RENEGADE.

Well aware that Major Mephisto knew of his presence in the mountains, and that he could but be there as a spy upon the movements of himself and his Hussars, Buffalo Bill felt that it was necessary for him to use the greatest caution not to be surprised.

It had been his desire to remain in the vicinity of the Hussars' Island as long as he could, before starting for the fort to carry out the contract to deliver to Major Mephisto, Lieutenant Otey, in return for Ethel Yulee, for he was watching every opportunity that might present itself to rescue her and thus not to deliver the officer into the hands of his foe to be killed.

The scout was in hopes that he might again run across Hal Watts, or capture some other of the Hussar band, for, were he able to do so, he made up his mind to play a bold game for the rescue of the maiden.

"If I can only catch one of those Masked Hussars," he said to himself, as he sat in his lonely camp, looking out from his point of observation, "I would play a game that I think would win."

"I would not hesitate if there were two of them, or

even three of them together, for it would be worth the risk.

"They have done no great harm, excepting the executions their chief has ordered, and I hate to fire on them to kill, as I would if they were regular red-handed road agents or Indians; but I would like to bag one of them.

"I'd dress up in his uniform the same as I did before, and go down to the bridge crossing, signal to have them send it over, and say that Major Mephisto sent me after the prisoner.

"She would recross the bridge with me, I carrying her saddle, for I would tell the guards the major told me to bring a horse that way for the lady, not wishing her to leave by the river and thus get wet.

"Once I had her across in the timber I would soon make for the fort.

"This is a good scheme I've got, but I've got to catch a Hussar to carry it out."

The scout sat musing over his scheme for some little time, and then he started, his face lighting up, as he spied afar off a horseman.

"There comes a Hussar, as sure as I am alive, and he is alone, too."

The horseman was at considerable distance from the scout's position, and he was moving along in a direction that evidently meant he was making for the Hussars' retreat.

Turning his glass upon him, after a long look, Buffalo Bill said aloud:

"That is not a Hussar, as I thought, but an Indian.

"Now, what is he up to, and how many more are behind him?"

"Well, he has got to pass my hiding-place, and if he is alone I'll just draw a bead on him and have a little chat in choice Sioux with him."

The horseman came along at a dog-trot, and as he drew nearer the scout kept his glass constantly to his eye.

Grip sat near him also interested in the coming of the horseman, to judge from his appearance, and both were hidden amid a group of rocks around which grew some stunted pines.

The trail that the man was following would bring him within twenty feet of the scout.

Suddenly the face of Buffalo Bill lighted up with real pleasure, and he said, eagerly:

"Now, I like him better than if I caught a Hussar.

"They are frequent in these parts, but that kind is scarce and come high.

"But, at whatever price, I must have him."

The man who was coming was not an Indian, but Max Melmer, otherwise known as "Red Heart," a renegade white, who had led a band of Indian cutthroats, committing countless atrocities on the border.

The horseman was now almost up to the scout, who laid his revolver upon the rock by his side, tightened his belt, threw up the rim of his sombrero, and then resumed his weapon.

As the man was nearly opposite, the scout muttered: "It's a pity to kill the horse, but it's the surest way to bag him."

With his last word he threw the revolver forward and fired.

With the report the horse fell dead, and his rider was



caught with one leg beneath him, quick as he had been in his effort to prevent just such a catastrophe.

Before the man was hardly on the ground the scout had bounded from his position and stood over him with a revolver at his head, while Grip stood by as though anxious to catch him by the throat.

"Max Melmer, you are just the gentleman I have been longing to see."

"Buffalo Bill!" groaned the renegade, feeling that resistance was vain.

"Yes; and I am happy to meet you."

"What do you want with me?"

"To take you to Fort Advance."

The man looked as though he meant to risk the bullet and endeavor to escape; but Buffalo Bill said quickly:

"Grip, watch him."

The hound growled, and the renegade cried in terror:

"Call off that red-mouthed brute, for God's sake."

The scout bent over and took the weapons from the man, and then he dragged the dead horse off of his leg, Grip still watching him with anxious eyes.

Then he tied his hands behind his back, took the saddle and bridle off of the dead horse, and told the prisoner to walk up the mountain ahead of him.

He soon came to his camp, and placing the saddle of the renegade upon the pack horse, he distributed the contents of the pack saddle upon both animals, after which he mounted his own steed and led the way along the ridge, just as the sun was setting.

"Come, Melmer, we have a long ride before us," he said.

"Where are you taking me?"

"To Fort Advance."

"What for?"

"To deliver you over to Colonel Yulee."

"He will hang me."

"If he don't, he will not do his duty."

"Say, Bill!"

"Well?"

"I know where there are some gold mines, and I'll take you there, if you'll let me go."

"No, sir, I'm not mining just now; but where were you going when I saw you?"

"To see a friend."

"Major Mephisto!"

"How do you know?"

"There is where you were going, and you cannot lie out of it, for I know where his island is."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I'm on visiting terms with the Hussars; but what did you want with him?"

"I won't tell you."

"Who is he?"

"It is none of your business."

"Oh, I don't care to quarrel with a dying man."

"Dying man?"

"Yes, for you are about the same as dying, for the colonel will soon hang you."

"Bill Cody, you promise to let me go, and I'll tell you all about the Hussars' Island."

"I know."

"I'll tell you who he is, and all about him."

"No, I'll find out without making terms with you; but

now keep still, for we must ride more rapidly," and the scout pressed on at a canter.

When he arrived at the fort, word was at once sent to Captain Vaughan and Surgeon Powell, who quickly arose and dressed, and when the scout and the renegade rode into the fort, they met them at the gate.

"Back again, Bill, and in great luck, I take it," said Surgeon Powell, glancing at the renegade, whom he had seen before.

"Yes, doc, I've got Red Heart, the white chief of the Sioux," answered the scout.

A wild cheer broke from the group of soldiers at this announcement, and the renegade's face became ashen in hue.

"Here, lieutenant, take this man to the lockup, and remember, he is the renegade chief, Red Heart, so put him in irons and place a double guard over him," said Captain Vaughan, and he then escorted Buffalo Bill to Colonel Yulee's quarters, Surgeon Powell accompanying them.

The colonel had heard the excitement and was nearly dressed, for he was in hopes that the scout had brought him his daughter.

But he greeted him warmly, and congratulated him upon his capture, adding:

"I shall give that scamp just ten days to make his peace with Heaven, and then he shall hang for his crimes, and I believe it will put down this war feeling again breaking out among the Sioux."

"It will, indeed, Colonel Yulee, and I believe that the renegade was on his way to the Masked Hussar to ask his aid in a war on the settlements when I captured him," and the scout told how he had captured Red Heart.

"But you have had no news from my poor child, Cody?" sadly asked the colonel.

"No, sir, but I have been watching closely, hoping to be able to carry out a little plan I had formed," and Buffalo Bill made known his plot to catch a Hussar, rig himself out in his uniform, and go by night to the island, in the absence of Major Mephisto, and play a bold game to get Ethel out of the power of the Hussars.

"Cody, if you caught the Hussar, I feel that you would succeed, after having once successfully gone on the island and returned; but do you think that Major Mephisto will keep his appointment for Sunday?"

"Without a doubt, sir."

"But, Cody, I cannot keep mine."

"Indeed, sir, does Lieutenant Otey still refuse?"

The colonel looked at Surgeon Powell in a pained kind of way and Frank Powell said, quietly:

"The fact is, Bill, Lieutenant Otey did not intend to give himself up, and not liking my words on the subject, he resented them and sent me a challenge."

"I accepted, and——"

"Of course he's dead; he might have known better than to face you, doc," bluntly said the scout.

"And I am deeply pained over the affair, Cody, as I feel that Powell did but right, all circumstances considered, but I fear it may not be so regarded at headquarters; but then, Surgeon Powell had, as you know, already resigned his commission to go East and get married, and was only remaining at the fort out of kindness, until his successor arrived, and this may mitigate matters."

"I feel that I am a private citizen, colonel, and the affair will not be pushed when it is known in all its bear-



ings. But this appointment with Major Mephisto must be kept."

"Where is the use, Powell?" asked Captain Vaughan.

"Well, as Bill had formed his little plans for the rescue of Miss Yulee, I have also one, and with his aid, it can be most cleverly carried out."

"What is it, doc, for I am ready," said the scout.

"It is just this, that I go with you on Sunday and impersonate Lieutenant Otey.

"I look very much as he did, and at twenty paces off no one would know the difference.

"Now this appointment is for noon on Sunday, and at a place you know well, Bill.

"As I understand it, you were to go there with Otey, and Major Mephisto was to escort Miss Yulee to the rendezvous.

"You, Cody and the Hussar were to halt fifty paces apart, and Miss Yulee and Otey were to ride forward, pass each other and each join the other's escort.

"Is not that so?"

"Yes, doc."

"Now I will go with you to impersonate Otey, and, passing Miss Yulee, will join the Mephisto, while she joins you.

"You can instantly ride off with her, while I will join the Mephisto."

"He will quickly recognize the cheat and shoot you, Powell, so I cannot consent to this," said Colonel Yulee.

"Colonel, Cody has known me for some time, and he will tell you that I can draw as quick as any man when it means life or death.

"But there will be no trouble, for I will call out to Major Mephisto that I came in his place, as he is dead.

"Then I will explain certain matters of interest to him, and I'll guarantee to break up the band of Masked Hussars, if Buffalo Bill will help me."

"I'm with you, doc, every time."

"Well, I wish Captain Vaughan's aid, too, and I'll explain my plan fully as we go on our way."

## CHAPTER XII.

### FRANK POWELL'S TRUMP CARD.

It was Sunday morning, and a cavalcade was going through the mountains at a rapid canter.

In the lead rode Captain Grayson Vaughan, and by his side was Buffalo Bill.

Next came the two fort scouts, Poker Paul and Hawk-Eye Harry, and behind these was Surgeon Powell.

Behind these came a sergeant, corporal and twenty-four gallant troopers.

Arriving at a good camping place, the party came to a halt, and all dismounted save Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell.

Then farewells were said, and the two rode on, leaving the troopers in the little camp.

A ride of an hour brought the two to the summit of a hill, a range over which the trail ran into a small valley beyond.

Reaching the top of the hill they drew rein, and Frank Powell said:

"You think there is no doubt of Major Mephisto's coming, Bill?"

"None, for there he is now," and Buffalo Bill pointed across the valley.

"Yes, and Miss Yulee is with him."

"She is, so we will ride forward and meet them."

"I can persuade him to set me free and I will meet you this evening. If I am not here, Bill, you will understand that he is not willing to come and has vented his anger upon me?"

"I understand, doc, and woe be unto him if he does," was the reply of the scout.

They had ridden forward as they were talking, and so had Major Mephisto and the one with him, whom the scout, through his glass, said was certainly Miss Yulee.

Halting at a safe distance, Buffalo Bill called out:

"Major Mephisto, are you willing to surrender your hostage for the officer now with me?"

"Gladly," came back the response.

"Go forward, doc, and go slow," said the scout, and as the surgeon rode toward Major Mephisto, Ethel Yulee was seen to advance also.

The Hussar chief and the scout sat motionless upon their horses.

The maiden quickened her gait slightly, and doffing his sombrero Buffalo Bill wheeled alongside of her while Surgeon Powell was yet several lengths of his horse from the chief.

"I congratulate you, Miss Yulee. Come, let us hasten," said Buffalo Bill.

"You are so kind, Mr. Cody; but, oh, how I feel for that poor officer, and yet his face expressed no fear as he passed me, and he raised his hat so politely. I did wish to shake hands with him, for Major Mephisto will kill him," and Ethel glanced back anxiously.

"No, Miss Yulee, there is no danger, I think; but as we ride along I will tell you just what we have done."

And the scout also looked back and saw Surgeon Powell and Major Mephisto confronting each other.

As Frank Powell approached the Hussar chief the latter was certainly deceived, for he said in an exultant tone:

"At last you are in my power, Hobart Otey."

"Major Mephisto, Lieutenant Otey is dead," said Surgeon Powell, calmly, as he drew rein by his side.

"Ha! you are not he?"

"No; I tell you he is dead, and I come in his place."

"Yes, I know you now; you are Surgeon Powell."



"I am."

"And you are strangely like that man."

"True."

"And do you mean that he is dead?"

"Yes."

"Who killed him?"

"I did."

"You?"

"Yes."

"How and why?"

"In a duel, and on account of a quarrel because I said he was a coward not to give himself up at once and release Miss Yulee from your power."

"Surgeon Powell, I thank you, and yet you have deprived me of killing a man I have longed to see die for years."

"I have a confession that he left for me, strange to say, and if you will ride on with me I will tell it to you," said the surgeon scout. "He confesses to having stolen from you the maiden you loved, by representing that you were dead. He was a surveyor in Texas then, he said, and met the lady at her father's ranch, and he loved her, though he knew she was engaged to you. You, he said, were on your ranch, a day's travel away from her home, and, determined to win her, he sought a certain band of desperadoes and paid them well to carry you off and kill you, although you escaped from them. He, and every one supposed that you were dead, and in time the lady, urged by her parents, became his wife.

"Haunted by the memory of what he had done, and angered that his wife should often speak of you, while he wished full control of her fortune, he had her placed in a lunatic asylum, from which she escaped and committed suicide. It was about this time that he got, through political influence, an appointment in the army and was ordered to the border, where he met you as a sergeant at Fort Advance. You had enlisted under your own name—Dudley Drew. His duel with you, and your sentence he also told, and was convinced that you had not been killed that night, and were really Major Mephisto."

"He was right; I was wounded, but very slightly, though one bullet stunned me," said the Masked Hussar, now known to be Dudley Drew. I revived, and went with the Indians, for I spoke their language, and I knew Melmer the Renegade. He made me a chief at once, hoping I would turn renegade also. I was revengeful, and I organized the band of Hussars, only five of them white men, all the rest being Sioux Indians. I have watched the Overland Trails to capture the six men whom Hobart Otey hired to kill me. They belonged to a band of desperadoes known as Prairie Pirates, and all of them had tattooed upon their arms the skull and crossbones in black, encircled by a red chain.

"They were hunted so hotly that they fled up north and joined the army, and, tracking them, I joined the army, too, to find them, and thus met Hobart Otey again.

"Those six men were all sentenced to death, and a reward offered for them dead or alive, so I did no wrong in executing them, as I have proof of just what they are, and my executioners were Indians. Now you know that Otey robbed me of my intended wife, caused her to take her own life, and that he paid men to have me killed. He is dead by your hand, and those men are dead by my order, and I am content."

"Come, let us ride to my den and let me send my men away, for no longer shall I hide my face as Major Mephisto, the Masked Hussar."

\* \* \* \* \*

When Buffalo Bill rode back to the rendezvous that afternoon, he saw Frank Powell and Sergeant Dudley Drew approaching at a gallop, for the latter no longer wore his helmet mask.

The scout drew rein and Surgeon Powell did the same.

The welcome that the sergeant got from Grayson Vaughan and his men made his heart glad, and that night around the campfire he told Captain Grayson, Ethel and the scout what Surgeon Powell had been told.

The next morning the party started for the fort, and there was no happier man in the wild West that day than was Colonel Royal Yulee, and he made Sergeant Drew his guest, at the same time saying:

"As you were executed, that was your discharge from the army, and if you are dead, as you were so reported, you certainly cannot be Major Mephisto, the Masked Hussar."

Soon after the return to the fort, Surgeon Powell went East to claim a bride, and Dudley Drew accompanied him, his band of men having been paid off and scattered.

Upon his return, six months after, there was a marriage at the fort, for Ethel Yulee became Mrs. Grayson Vaughan.

The "best man" on the occasion of this wedding was Buffalo Bill, who had been appointed chief of scouts to General Royal Yulee, who never tires of telling the story of Buffalo Bill's best trail in hunting down Major Mephisto, the Masked Hussar.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 60, will contain "Buffalo Bill's Blind; or, Running the Death Gauntlet," a story that is full of thrills from cover to cover. It gives a true account of some of the wildest adventures of the Great Scout on the Overland Trails.

Wait till you read of the Death Gauntlet he ran. Then you'll know what peril and danger mean.





# THRILLING ADVENTURE



Is it warm out your way? We're having pretty warm weather here, too, but this contest is just as active as ever. Keep up the good work, boys, even if the thermometer keeps up too.

This contest is a hot one—about 120° in the shade, and it means a good deal to win in it. It means a good deal of credit as well as a stunning prize for the boy who comes out among the lucky seven at the close.

Look on page 31 for full particulars.

## Run Over By a Train.

(By Harry Whitmeyer, Pennsylvania.)

Many boys may have had a more thrilling adventure than mine, but very few were as near being ground beneath the wheels of an engine as I was, and yet escaped.

Imagine yourself being held fast on the railroad, facing a freight train, utterly unable to get away, and the engine but six feet from you (one second of time), and yet escape with your life. That was my experience.

I was born August 10, 1888, and when seven years old, or September 16, 1895, I met with an accident that nearly cost me my life. I had left home for school, and had to cross the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, ninety yards from home, and in order to reach school by a shorter route, I was in the habit of walking along the railroad a short distance to a street 125 yards from where I got on to the railroad, after walking seven yards I came to a guard rail, and like a boy, I stepped on this rail and began walking on it, but only a few steps, when my foot went down between the rails.

Now while my foot went down easily, I found I could not get it loose. The more I tried to get out the faster it seemed I got. I was not very much alarmed until I heard a train, and on looking up, I saw a freight train from the Lancaster and Lebanon Railroad just passing into the P. and R. road at the bridge which crosses the creek, 125 yards from where I was fast. I called to several older boys for help, but they thinking I was fooling, paid little attention to me. I realized my danger and became greatly alarmed, and Millard Harnish, several years older than I was, seeing I was really unable to get away, came to my assistance, but he, too, was unable to get my foot loose.

The engineer seeing I was fast, at once reversed the engine, trying to stop before he got to me, but that was impossible, as he was too close. There I was, standing over the rail, and if the engine struck me, not running fast enough to knock me from the track, it would only

be to throw me over backward and have the wheels run over me from my foot to my head.

When Harnish saw he could not get my foot out, and the engine only five or six feet from me, he gave me a pull sideways from the rail, and let the wheels run over my foot, cutting it off above the ankle. Had my friend not had presence of mind to pull me over, I would have been ground beneath the wheels as I would hardly thought of throwing myself over. I now walk on one foot, the other being a crutch.

## A Bicycle Adventure.

(By Howard M. Viall, Minn.)

One day about a year ago I and a friend of mine went fishing to a place called Hogsback, where we had to go down a very steep and long hill, which is covered with rocks nearly the whole length.

We went on our wheels and I said I would ride down, but my friend said he would not risk his life for that ride.

I started, but could not hold back enough, so I let the wheel go.

My wheel had a very poor chain then; it was old and very much worn and would break like glass.

The road is quite crooked down that hill, and at times you cannot see twenty feet before you.

All of a sudden I flew around a curve, and saw a team coming over the bridge.

The driver had just time to get as close to the edge of the bridge as possible when I got to the bridge.

When I was on the bridge just beside the team that chain broke and wound upon the back forks and among the spokes with quite a noise. The wheel stopped suddenly, and I went head over heels into the water and the team ran away up the hill.

They met my friend up a ways and he hurried down to see what the matter was.



When I went into the water I struck my head upon a rock in the river bed.

Ordinarily, I am a good swimmer, but being dazed I was not able to do much.

The water carried me under the bridge, and I grabbed a log and held on for dear life.

When my friend came he helped me out and we went home. I have a good chain now, but I won't coast down that hill again for a while.

### Boring for Gas.

(By Reed Newkirk, Ind.)

This summer my friends and I were boring for gas. We had been at work two months and ten days. We once struck water after we had went down fourteen hundred feet. We began taking the drill out, when we had got the drill all out the water spouted about thirty feet into the air.

We could smell the gas in the water. When we had taken the drill out it was about three o'clock, and we did not work any more that day. After supper we went out to get a drink of cool water. When my friend took a drink of the water he spit it out and said that it tasted like rotten eggs, and had salt and sulphur in it. In about two weeks it stopped running and we began drilling again. We had been drilling three days when the drill all at once slipped and went down.

In two or three hours the water began to run, and it made such a noise that every one of us ran like a scared deer. When I went to my home I told everybody about the well. This is the end of my story.

### An Unexpected Fall.

(By Harry Treanor, South Dakota.)

I and four other boys were playing "follow the leader." We climbed upon a roof of an old saloon. All the others had dropped through a hole in the roof on some planks. I then swung down and dropped.

The planks broke under me, and I fell in a deep hole. I bumped my head on an iron piece and rolled down and fell on my head.

I was pulled up and when I came to the doctor was there and said it was only a scalp wound. That was the nearest to death I have been.

### Held Up By Robbers.

(By Ben Shipley, Ohio.)

In the year 1896 we were living near Pikeville, Kentucky. I was fifteen years old. One afternoon my father and I went to town to draw our money out of the bank, so as to buy a farm in Ohio. We did not leave town until dark. We had about six miles to go over the mountain.

When we came to a sharp turn in the road three masked men leaped into the road in front of us. One drew a revolver on father, one held the horses and one came after the money.

I was lying down in the wagon. Father had one hand in his pocket, and when he pulled his hand out he pitched the pocketbook to me. At the side of the road

there was a precipice about fifty feet deep, but the last fifteen feet was a slope covered with sand. Taking the pocketbook I leaped from the wagon down the precipice and lit in the sand, which checked the fall.

Had it not been for the sand I would have been killed, but as it was I had my left arm broken. I then squeezed myself into a crevice of the rocks and found myself in a small cave. Meantime the thieves searched father and finding no money they bound him and started the horses. The horses went home without stopping. The thieves knew then that I had my money so they searched for me. I stood with my revolver in my right hand ready to fire at any one that poked his head in the crevice. One man walked past, but did not see me. I stayed there until morning, then I made my way home. My arm pained me fearfully all that day. We are now living on an eighty-acre farm and prospering.

### Logan's Pond.

(By Chas. Clark, Ark.)

About two years ago I lived in a country town, Greensburg, which is halfway between Indianapolis and Cincinnati. A friend of mine and I were going fishing to a small pond outside of town.

We fished for an hour or two and didn't get anything but a crawfish. So we thought we would go in swimming.

There was a log which led out to a small island. We stripped and got out on the log. My friend dived first and was trying to show me how to swim dog fashion and was splashing water on me.

All at once I lost my balance and fell off and caught my leg in a root. I was held under for about two minutes, and then my friend ran after his coat on shore and pulling his pocket-knife out dived after me and cut the root.

This freed me, and I swam to the bank and I didn't want to go swimming any more that day.

### A Spoiled Fishing Trip.

(By Thos. William Nelson, Pa.)

Last June, in company of an old gentleman named Bunker, I went several miles down the Ohio River for a two weeks' fishing trip. After we found a good location and put our tents up and arranged things generally it was growing dark rapidly.

We made supper, and after that we cleaned up and Mr. Bunker told me to go to bed, as we would be up before daybreak next morning as he desired to get a good day's fishing. He wakened me next morning and told me to take the coffee pot to the spring and fill it with water while he attended to the fire. I put a pair of tennis shoes on and went down to the spring. The spring was in a little hollow near the river, and to take a short cut I jumped down the bank. Something like a red-hot poker seemed to enter my foot. I thought at first I had been bitten by a snake, but striking a match I saw I had jumped on a rusty spike nail which was in a piece of driftwood. It went clear through my foot.

I halloed for Mr. B., who came running down to see



what the trouble was about. He brought a torch with him and as soon as he saw the nail he attempted to take it out, but as he was near eighty years old, his strength was unequal to it, but by using a piece of board for a lever he finally succeeded in bringing it out, and after washing the wound he bound salt bacon on the foot. Next morning my foot was swollen so badly I could not get my shoe on. The swelling extended up as far as the knee, and my foot was turning black. Mr. B. got in his boat and rowed two miles down the river and brought a physician who lanced the foot and put poultices on with the mild assurance that if I wasn't careful I might lose my leg from amputation.

It was two weeks before I had any use for my foot, and you can be sure my fishing trip was spoiled.

So to readers of this who are fond of fishing let this be a warning, and when you go to enjoy the sport wear heavy-soled shoes and don't jump down the bank of the river in the dark. It is unnecessary to tell the readers how painful a wound of that nature is. Lots of our readers have probably had a similar accident so they know from experience the painfulness of such a wound.

### A Runaway Coon.

(By George Wilson, Alabama.)

My brother and myself had started a little show in a barn. We had a stage at one end and seats at the other. We had just commenced when a burly negro boy pushed his way in. I told him to get out and he said, "I don't need to."

I told my brother, and we didn't know what to do. I didn't want to start a fight so I got a gourd, then I cut eyes, nose and mouth in it. I then got a candle, then lit it and put it on.

I then rushed in the barn, crying, "Ghost! ghost!"

The negro was the first to the door.

I then said, "This ghost is hungry and somebody will be eaten up. So I think it might as well be the negro."

All of a sudden something darted out of the doorway. It was the negro. I never saw anybody run so fast in all my life. We then went on with the show.

### An Unpleasant Trolley Ride.

(By John A. Long, N. Y.)

I was once hit by a car on Fifth avenue and Prospect avenue, Brooklyn, and carried about half a block or so. This is how the accident happened: I was running over from one of the Butler stores, where I was working, to get a ride home on a truck when I dodged a carriage horse only to hear a yell from the man driving it and the gonging of the car.

I was then thrown up in the air and landed on the fender of it, then the motorman called to me to hold on to the iron bar used for moving the tracks. The conductor jumped off the car and took my name, but I was so excited it was some time before he got it. This is a true story.



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